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SPIDER-MAN AND HIS AMAZING FRIENDS!
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KING CONAN™
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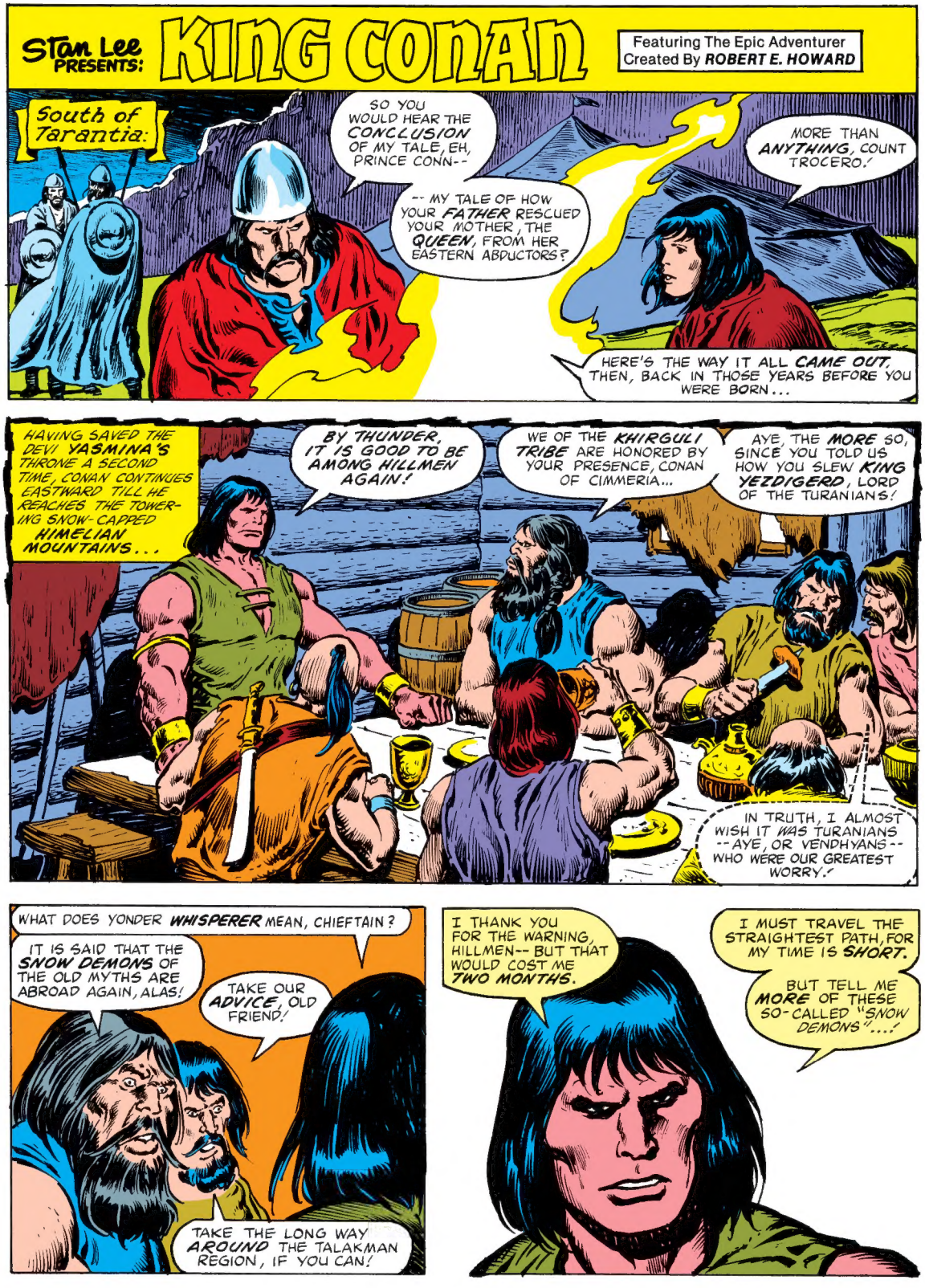
Stan Lee PRESENTS:
KING CONAN
Featuring The Epic Adventurer Created By ROBERT E. HOWARD
South of Tarantia:
SO YOU WOULD HEAR THE CONCLUSION OF MY TALE, EH, PRINCE CONN--
-- MY TALE OF HOW YOUR FATHER RESCUED YOUR MOTHER, THE QUEEN, FROM HER EASTERN ABDUCTORS?
MORE THAN ANYTHING, COUNT TROCERO!
HERE'S THE WAY IT ALL CAME OUT, THEN, BACK IN THOSE YEARS BEFORE YOU WERE BORN...
HAVING SAVED THE DEVI YASMINA'S THRONE A SECOND TIME, CONAN CONTINUES EASTWARD TILL HE REACHES THE TOWERING SNOW-CAPPED KIMELIAN MOUNTAINS...
BY THUNDER, IT IS GOOD TO BE AMONG HILLMEN AGAIN!
WE OF THE KHIRGULI TRIBE ARE HONORED BY YOUR PRESENCE, CONAN OF CIMMERIA...
AYE, THE MORE SO, SINCE YOU TOLD US HOW YOU SLEW KING YEZDIGERD, LORD OF THE TURANIANS!
IN TRUTH, I ALMOST WISH IT WAS TURANIANS --AYE, OR VENDHYANS-- WHO WERE OUR GREATEST WORRY.
WHAT DOES YONDER WHISPERER MEAN, CHIEFTAIN?
IT IS SAID THAT THE SNOW DEMONS OF THE OLD MYTHS ARE ABROAD AGAIN, ALAS!
TAKE OUR ADVICE, OLD FRIEND!
TAKE THE LONG WAY AROUND THE TALAKMAN REGION, IF YOU CAN!
I THANK YOU FOR THE WARNING, HILLMEN-- BUT THAT WOULD COST ME TWO MONTHS.
I MUST TRAVEL THE STRAIGHTEST PATH, FOR MY TIME IS SHORT.
BUT TELL ME MORE OF THESE SO-CALLED "SNOW DEMONS"....!

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# A QUEEN RECLAIMED!

THE EPIC CONCLUSION OF OUR ADAPTATION OF *CONAN THE AVENGER* BY *L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP* AND *BJÖRN NYBERG*

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FEATURING THE HERO CREATED BY *ROBERT E. HOWARD*

THE WIND HOWLS SADLY AS CONAN MAKES HIS WAY ACROSS THE SNOWY VASTNESS... AND TEN YEARS HAVE MADE THE TRACKLESS HIMELIANS NO MORE HOSPITABLE TO MAN OR BEAST.

YET, THE KHIRUGLI HILLMEN TOLD HIM, DAYS AGO, OF SOMETHING WHICH IS ***NEITHER*** MAN NOR BEAST, YET WHICH STALKS THE ICY WATERS...

***WHAT*** WAS IT THEIR GREY-BEARDED CHIEFTAIN SAID, AGAIN?...

"***DEVILS*** OUT OF THE NIGHTED GULFS OF THE ***BLACK ABYSS*** HAUNT THE SNOWY REACHES OF ***TALAKMA***... AND MEN HAVE BEEN FOUND WITH THEIR BODIES BROKEN, MANGLED BY SOMETHING OF TERRIBLE ***STRENGTH*** AND ***FEROCITY***.

"BUT THE MOST HORRIBLE THING OF ALL IS THAT ***EVERY CORPSE***, NO MATTER HOW RECENTLY SLAIN, WAS ***FROZEN STIFF*** TO THE CORE--FINGERS AND LIMBS SO BRITTLE THAT THEY ***BREAK OFF*** LIKE ICICLES!"

YET LADEN WITH SUPPLIES, HE HAS SEEN ***NOTHING*** THESE DAYS PAST, AS HE TRAVERSED THE SNOWS WITH THE EASY LONG-LIMBED ***HILLMAN'S STRIDE*** THAT EATS UP THE MOUNTAINOUS MILES.

AT NIGHT, HE SLEEPS IN PRIMITIVE ***SNOW CAVES*** DUG WITH HIS OWN CRUDE SHOVEL...

AND IN DARKNESS, AS IN THE BLINDING LIGHT OF DAY, HE HEARS AND SEES ...***NOTHING***.

INDEED, PERHAPS IT IS THE VERY FACT THAT THE SNOWS SEEM UNBROKEN, ALMOST DEVOID OF LIVING THINGS, THAT MAKES HIM ***CARELESS***.

AND IN THE HIMELIANS, ONE IS RARELY CARELESS...

... TWICE!
HRARRR

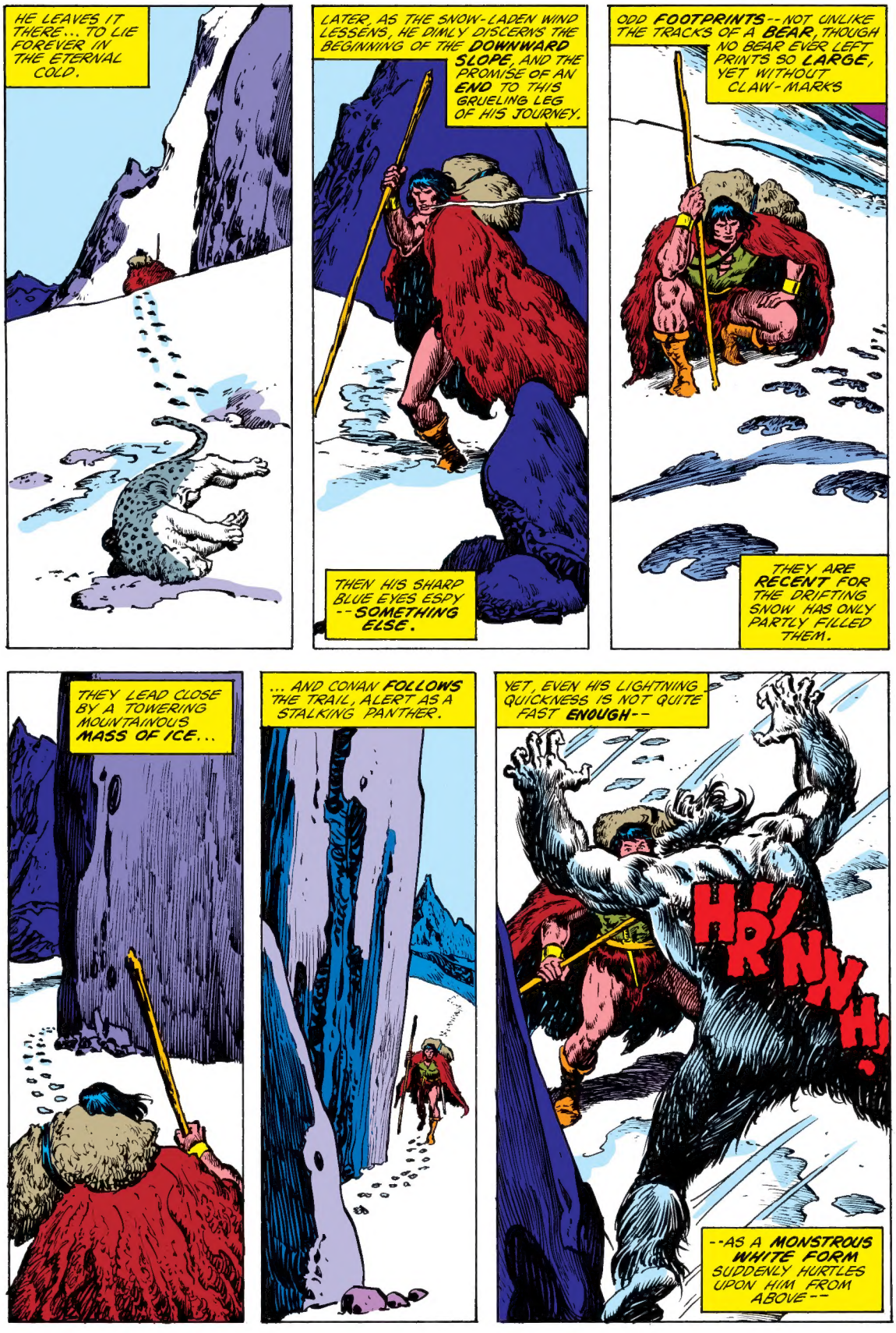
IT HAS BEEN, THEY SAY, A BAD WINTER, IN THIS PART OF THE MOUNTAINS... ELSE, THE SNOW LEOPARD WOULD NEVER HAVE ATTACKED A FULL-GROWN MAN.
GRRL

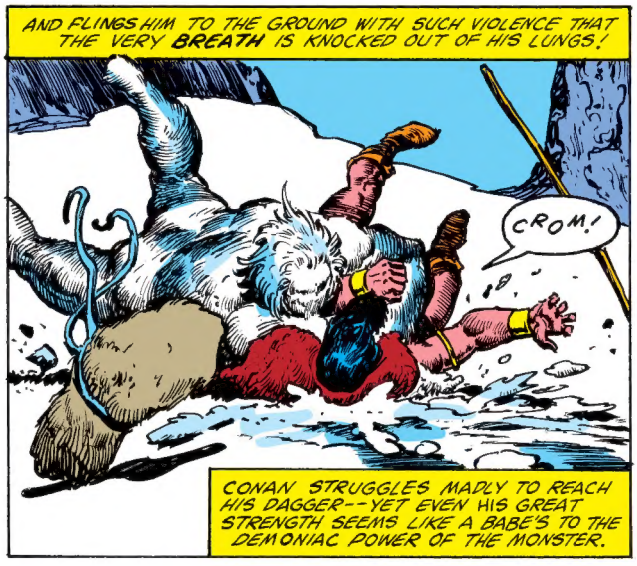
IN ANY EVENT, IT HAS PICKED THE WRONG MAN.

CONAN'S HEAVY FUR CLOAK HAS PROTECTED HIM INITIALLY, FROM THE BIG CAT'S THIRSTING FANGS...
SNARRRL

AND NOW, WITH A RIPPING THRUST OF HIS LONG DAGGER--

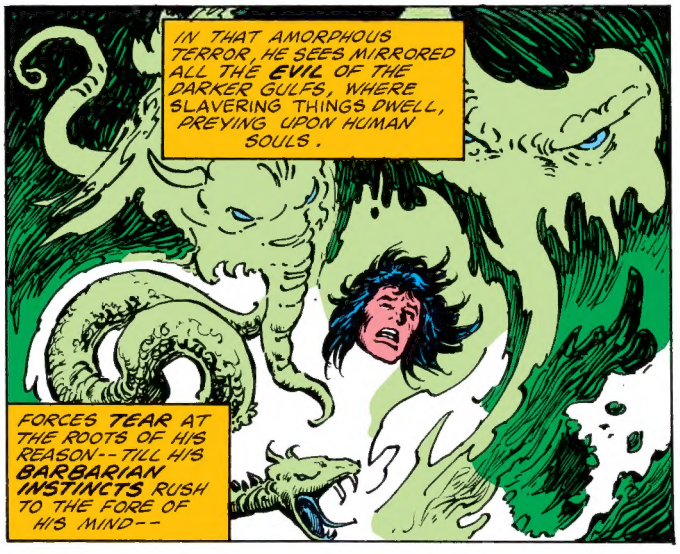
--HE FORCES THE ANIMAL TO THE GROUND, CHOKING OUT ITS LIFE IN HARSH CONVULSIONS.
GRRRRGG


HE LEAVES IT THERE... TO LIE FOREVER IN THE ETERNAL COLD.
LATER, AS THE SNOW-LADEN WIND LESSENS, HE DIMLY DISCERNS THE BEGINNING OF THE DOWNWARD SLOPE, AND THE PROMISE OF AN END TO THIS GRUELING LEG OF HIS JOURNEY.
THEN HIS SHARP BLUE EYES ESPY --SOMETHING ELSE.
ODD FOOTPRINTS--NOT UNLIKE THE TRACKS OF A BEAR, THOUGH NO BEAR EVER LEFT PRINTS SO LARGE, YET WITHOUT CLAW-MARKS
THEY ARE RECENT FOR THE DRIFTING SNOW HAS ONLY PARTLY FILLED THEM.
THEY LEAD CLOSE BY A TOWERING MOUNTAINOUS MASS OF ICE...
... AND CONAN FOLLOWS THE TRAIL, ALERT AS A STALKING PANTHER.
YET, EVEN HIS LIGHTNING QUICKNESS IS NOT QUITE FAST ENOUGH--
HRRNNH!
--AS A MONSTROUS WHITE FORM SUDDENLY HURTLES UPON HIM FROM ABOVE--


AND FLINGS HIM TO THE GROUND WITH SUCH VIOLENCE THAT THE VERY BREATH IS KNOCKED OUT OF HIS LUNGS!
CROM!
CONAN STRUGGLES MADLY TO REACH HIS DAGGER--YET EVEN HIS GREAT STRENGTH SEEMS LIKE A BABE'S TO THE DEMONIAC POWER OF THE MONSTER.

AND THEN, A HORRIBLE FEATURELESS FACE BENDS FORWARD--AS IF TO STARE STRAIGHT INTO HIS EYES --

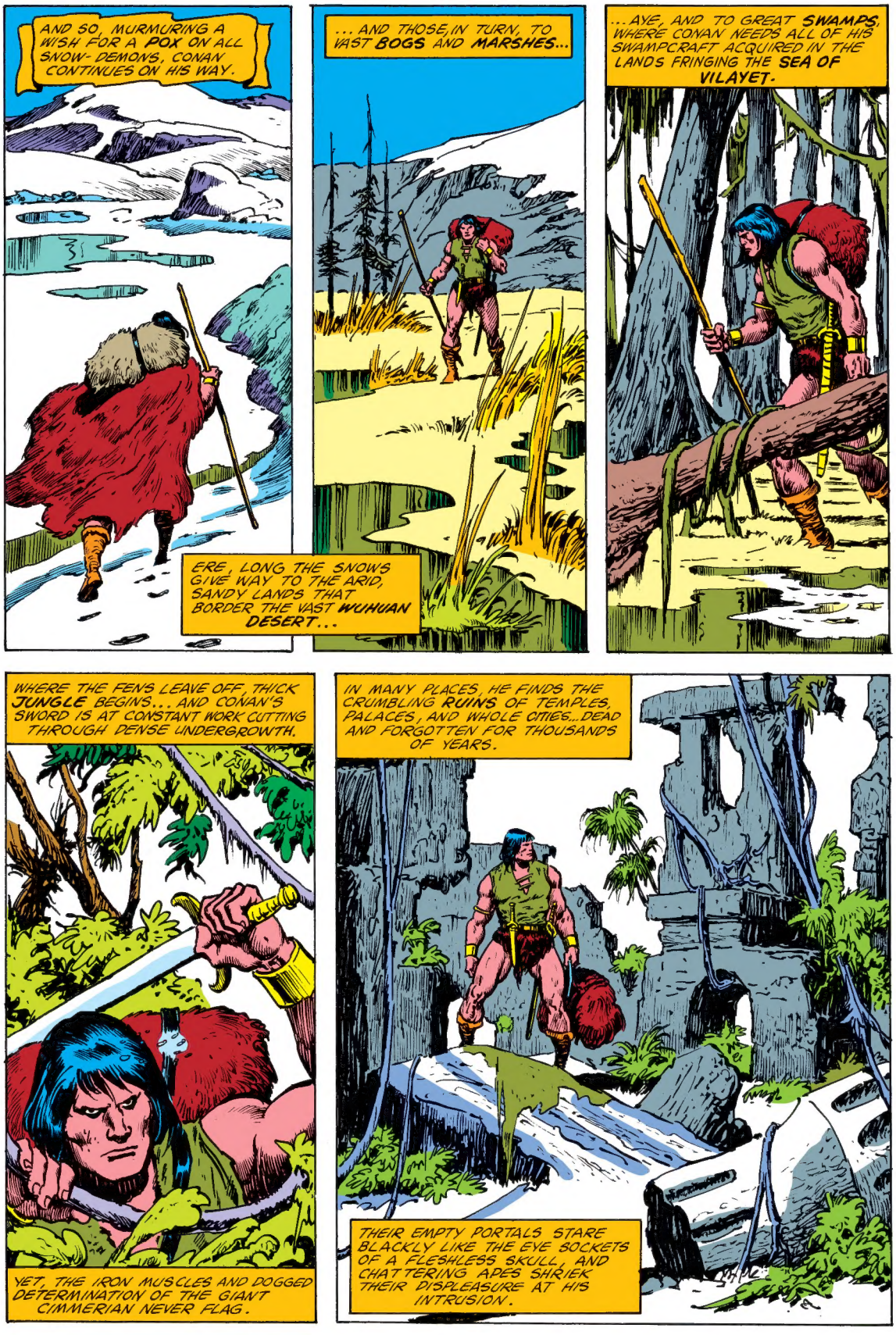
--AND AN ABYSMAL CHILL BEGINS TO ENVELOP HIS BODY--AS HE FEELS A DEADLY TUGGING AT THE BORDERS OF HIS MIND...

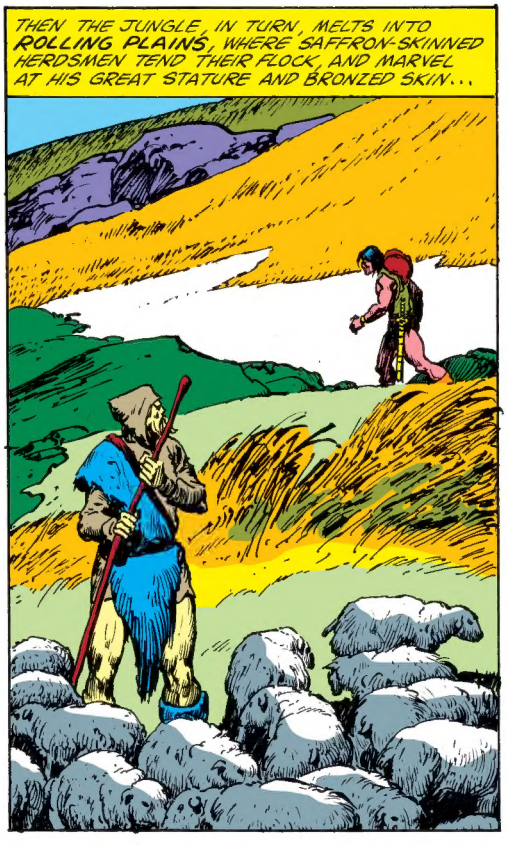

IN THAT AMORPHOUS TERROR, HE SEES MIRRORED ALL THE EVIL OF THE DARKER GULFS, WHERE SLAVERING THINGS DWELL, PREYING UPON HUMAN SOULS.
FORCES TEAR AT THE ROOTS OF HIS REASON--TILL HIS BARBARIAN INSTINCTS RUSH TO THE FORE OF HIS MIND--

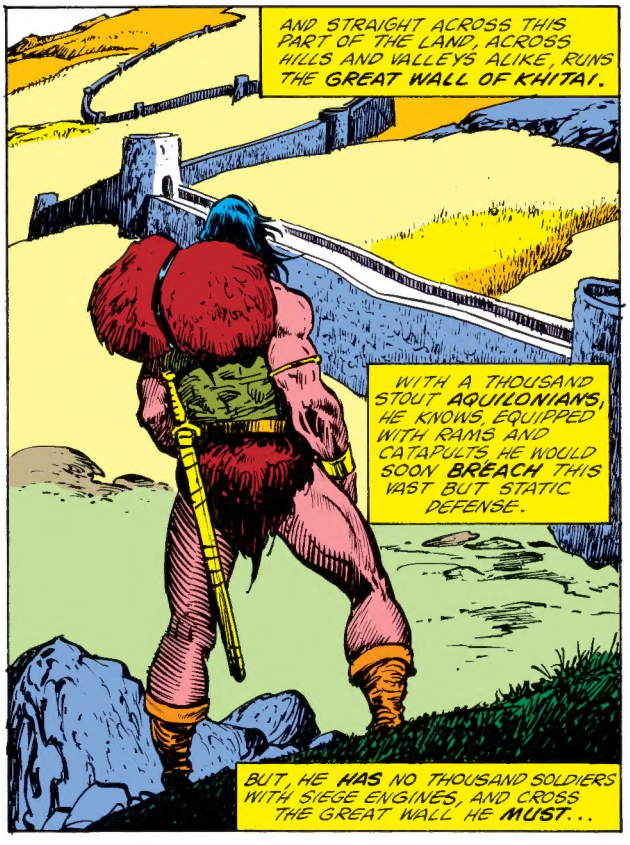
--AND HE LASHES OUT WITH THE FULL UNFETTERED FURY OF SELF-PRESERVATION!
HOWL

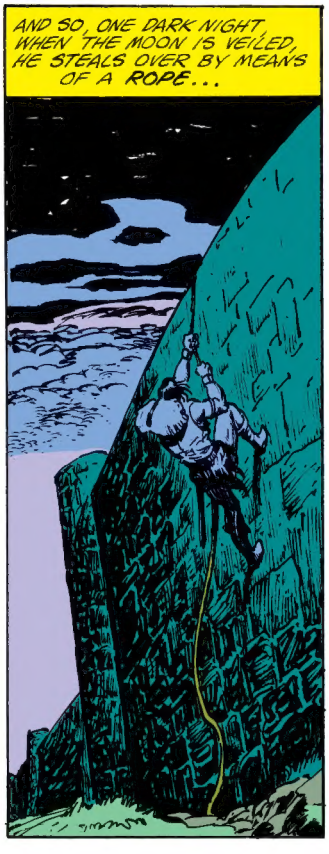
EVEN HE IS ASTONISHED, HOWEVER, WHEN AT HIS VERY FIRST BLOW, THE MONSTER NOT ONLY UTTERS ITS SHRILL ULULATING CRY--
--BUT EVEN RELEASES HIM FOR AN INSTANT, AS IT CONTORTS WITH FEAR AND PAIN!
WL

THEN HE REALIZES --IT IS THE RING WHICH HAS DONE IT.
THE RING OF RAKHAMON GIVEN TO HIM BY THE WIZARD PELIAS*--AND POSSESSED OF UNKNOWN POWERS OF MAGIC AND SORCERY!
THE TALISMAN WHICH, HE PROMISED, WOULD AID CONAN TO SURVIVE... PERHAPS EVEN TO PREVAIL ... IN HIS QUEST TO DESTROY THE EVIL SORCERER YAH CHIENG AND REGAIN HIS LOST QUEEN
IT IS A DEADLY WEAPON, IT SEEMS, AGAINST THIS WRAITH OF THE ICY DARKNESS...
*SEE ISSUE #5 -- L.J.
...AND CONAN STRIKES AGAIN, AND AGAIN!
ARROOOOO
NOW, THE ULULATION CHANGES TO A SHRILL SHRIEK--
--AS THE WHITE HORROR FLINGS ITSELF BACKWARD TO ESCAPE THE TERROR OF THE RING--
--AND THE CIMMERIAN LUNGES AFTER IT, HIS RING-WEARING FIST WORKING LIKE A HAMMER.
ITS STEPS BRING IT TO THE BRINK OF AN ICY CHASM-- WITH CONAN STILL CHARGING IT LIKE AN AVENGING SPIRIT --
--TILL IT TOPPLES OVER THE EDGE!
AARROOOOOO...
PELIAS GAVE ME A POWERFUL BAUBLE, INDEED!


AND SO, MURMURING A WISH FOR A POX ON ALL SNOW-DEMONS, CONAN CONTINUES ON HIS WAY.
ERE, LONG THE SNOWS GIVE WAY TO THE ARID, SANDY LANDS THAT BORDER THE VAST WUHUAN DESERT...
...AND THOSE, IN TURN, TO VAST BOGS AND MARSHES...
...AYE, AND TO GREAT SWAMPS, WHERE CONAN NEEDS ALL OF HIS SWAMPCRAFT ACQUIRED IN THE LANDS FRINGING THE SEA OF VILAYET.
WHERE THE FENS LEAVE OFF, THICK JUNGLE BEGINS... AND CONAN'S SWORD IS AT CONSTANT WORK CUTTING THROUGH DENSE UNDERGROWTH.
YET, THE IRON MUSCLES AND DOGGED DETERMINATION OF THE GIANT CIMMERIAN NEVER FLAG.
IN MANY PLACES, HE FINDS THE CRUMBLING RUINS OF TEMPLES, PALACES, AND WHOLE CITIES...DEAD AND FORGOTTEN FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS.
THEIR EMPTY PORTALS STARE BLACKLY LIKE THE EYE SOCKETS OF A FLESHLESS SKULL, AND CHATTERING APES SHRIEK THEIR DISPLEASURE AT HIS INTRUSION.

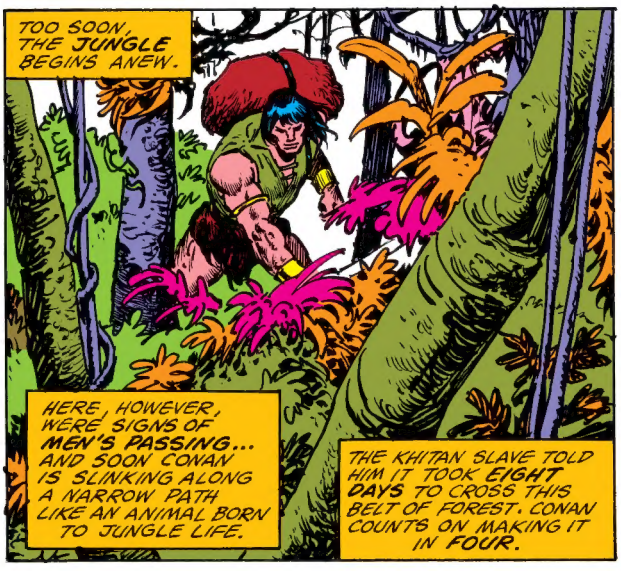

THEN THE JUNGLE, IN TURN, MELTS INTO ROLLING PLAINS, WHERE SAFFRON-SKINNED HERDSMEN TEND THEIR FLOCK, AND MARVEL AT HIS GREAT STATURE AND BRONZED SKIN...


AND STRAIGHT ACROSS THIS PART OF THE LAND, ACROSS HILLS AND VALLEYS ALIKE, RUNS THE GREAT WALL OF KHITAI.
WITH A THOUSAND STOUT AQUILONIANS, HE KNOWS, EQUIPPED WITH RAMS AND CATAPULTS HE WOULD SOON BREACH THIS VAST BUT STATIC DEFENSE.
BUT, HE HAS NO THOUSAND SOLDIERS WITH SIEGE ENGINES, AND CROSS THE GREAT WALL HE MUST...

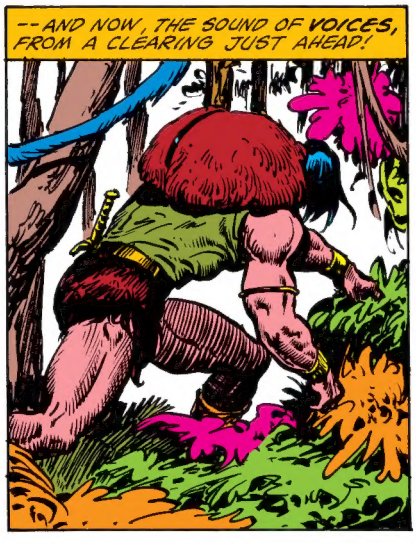

AND SO, ONE DARK NIGHT WHEN THE MOON IS VEILED, HE STEALS OVER BY MEANS OF A ROPE...

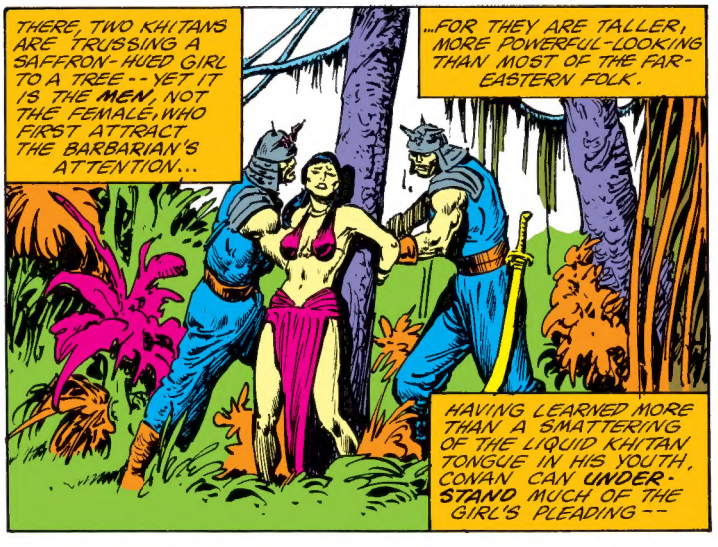
HE DOES NOT EVEN SLAY THE ASTONISHED GUARDSMAN HE FINDS THERE...
...BUT MERELY STUNS HIM BY A BLOW ON THE HELMET...

...AND BEGINS TO TRAVERSE THE GRASSY FIELDS BEYOND IN THE TIRELESS, MILE-DEVOURING STRIDE, WHICH ENABLES HIM TO COVER VAST DISTANCES BETWEEN RESTS.

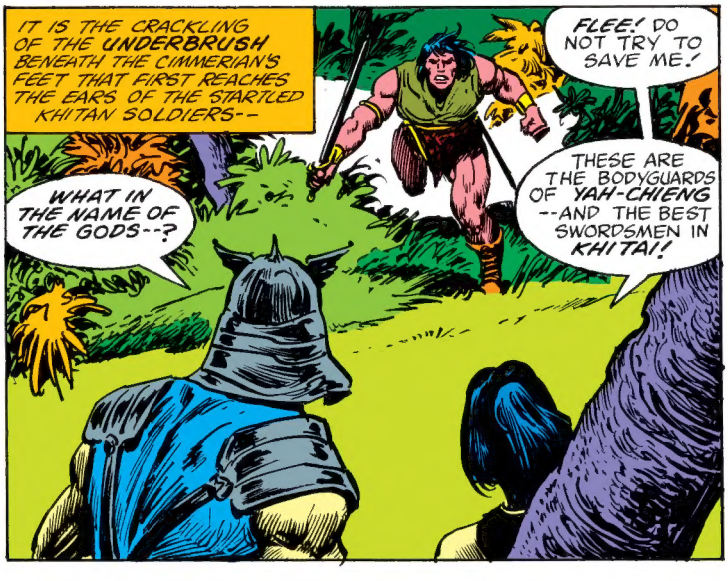

TOO SOON, THE JUNGLE BEGINS ANEW.
HERE, HOWEVER, WERE SIGNS OF MEN'S PASSING... AND SOON CONAN IS SLINKING ALONG A NARROW PATH LIKE AN ANIMAL BORN TO JUNGLE LIFE.
THE KHITAN SLAVE TOLD HIM IT TOOK EIGHT DAYS TO CROSS THIS BELT OF FOREST. CONAN COUNTS ON MAKING IT IN FOUR.

HE IS THINKING THAT HE MUST NOW BE IN THAT JUNGLE BORDERING THE CITY-STATE OF PAIKANG, WHEN HE HEARS SOMETHING:
THE CLANK OF METAL--

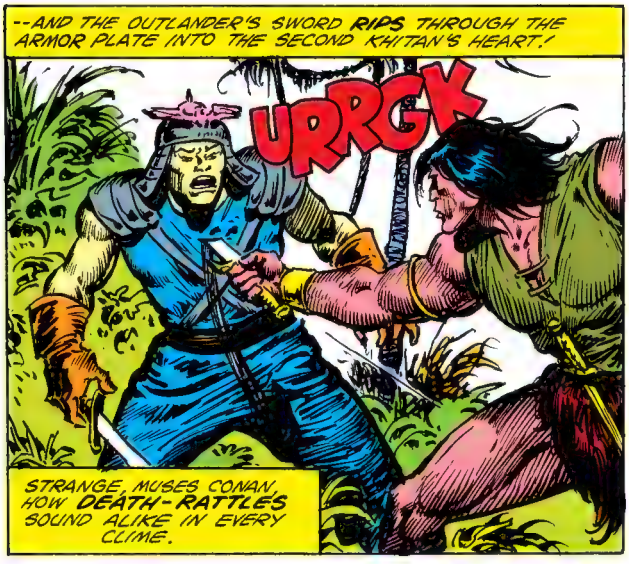

--AND NOW, THE SOUND OF VOICES, FROM A CLEARING JUST AHEAD!


THERE, TWO KHITANS ARE TRUSSING A SAFFRON-HUED GIRL TO A TREE--YET IT IS THE MEN, NOT THE FEMALE, WHO FIRST ATTRACT THE BARBARIAN'S ATTENTION...
...FOR THEY ARE TALLER, MORE POWERFUL-LOOKING THAN MOST OF THE FAR-EASTERN FOLK.
HAVING LEARNED MORE THAN A SMATTERING OF THE LIQUID KHITAN TONGUE IN HIS YOUTH, CONAN CAN UNDERSTAND MUCH OF THE GIRL'S PLEADING--

--AND HIS BLOOD BOILS, AS HE REALIZES HE IS ABOUT TO WITNESS ONE OF THE CRUEL HUMAN SACRIFICES HE HAS TRIED TO STAMP OUT IN AQUILONIA.


IT IS THE CRACKLING OF THE UNDERBRUSH BENEATH THE CIMMERIAN'S FEET THAT FIRST REACHES THE EARS OF THE STARTLED KHITAN SOLDIERS--
WHAT IN THE NAME OF THE GODS--?
FLEE! DO NOT TRY TO SAVE ME!
THESE ARE THE BODYGUARDS OF YAH-CHIENG --AND THE BEST SWORDSMEN IN KHITAI!

YAH CHIENG! THE VERY WIZARD WHO, PELIAS SAID, PLANNED THE KIDNAPPING OF HIS BELOVED ZENOBIA.
THE NAME OF HIS FOE BRINGS AN EVEN GREATER FURY TO CONAN'S HEART--
AAAA
--AS WITH SLITTED EYES, HE STRIKES THE NEAREST KHITAN LIKE A CHARGING LION!
UNEQUALLED AS SWORDSMEN IN KHITAI THEY MAY WELL BE--
--BUT, BEFORE THE WRATH OF CONAN, THEY ARE BUT STRAWS IN A WIND THAT BLOWS FROM THE WEST--
--AND, AS THE CAPTIVE WOMAN FOLLOWS THE FEARSOME FIGHT WITH WIDENED EYES--
--THE INFERIOR STEEL OF KHITAI SUDDENLY BREAKS BEFORE THE SUPPLE STRENGTH OF CONAN'S BLADE, FORGED FROM MATCHLESS HIMELIAN ORE BY A KHIRGULI SMITH--


--AND THE OUTLANDER'S SWORD RIPS THROUGH THE ARMOR PLATE INTO THE SECOND KHITAN'S HEART!
URRGK
STRANGE, MUSES CONAN, HOW DEATH-RATTLES SOUND ALIKE IN EVERY CLIME.

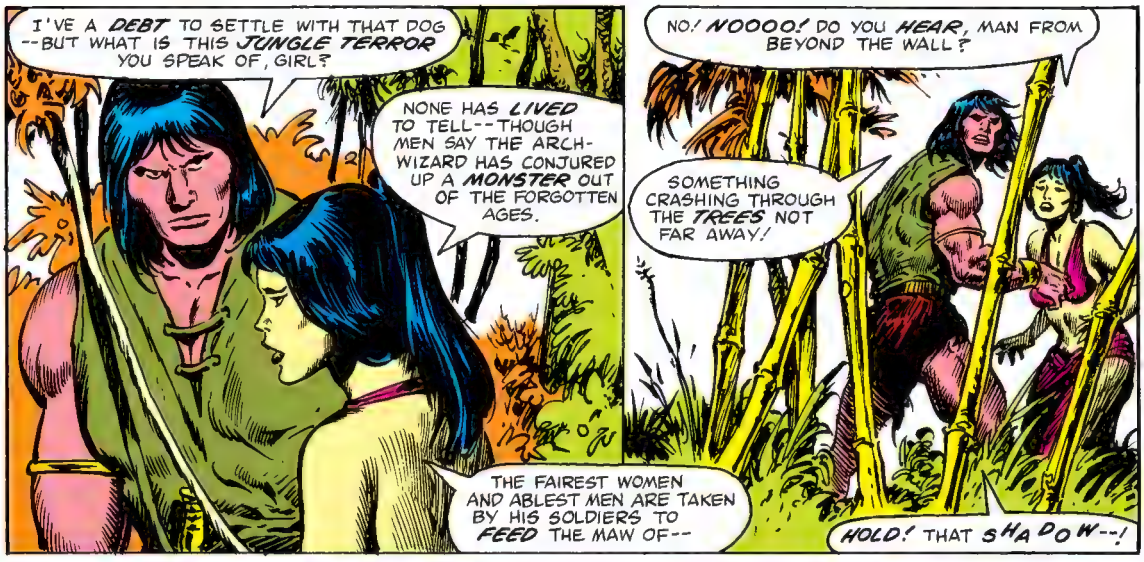
NOW, GIRL--
OH! WHEN YOU BURST FROM COVER, I--I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT HAVE BEEN FROM MY VILLAGE.
BUT, NOW, I SEE YOU ARE A CHENG-LI... A WHITE-SKINNED FOREIGNER FROM THE LEGEND-LANDS WEST OF THE WALL!

W-WILL YOU DEVOUR ME ALIVE, AS THE LEGENDS SAY--
--OR WILL YOU TAKE ME BACK TO YOUR HOMELAND AS A SLAVE MOST WRETCHED?
NEITHER, GIRL.

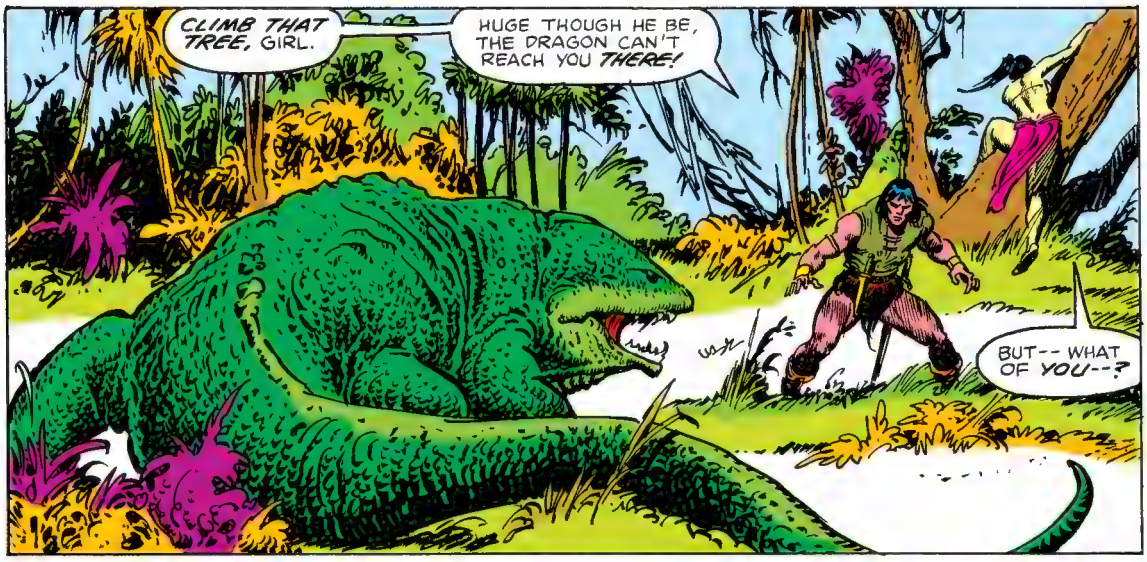
BY MACHA, I DIDN'T KNOW THEY BRED WOMEN THIS BEAUTIFUL IN THE GOLDEN LANDS.
IT SEEMS I SHOULD HAVE VISITED THESE PARTS LONG AGO.
YOUR ACCENTS ARE STRANGE...

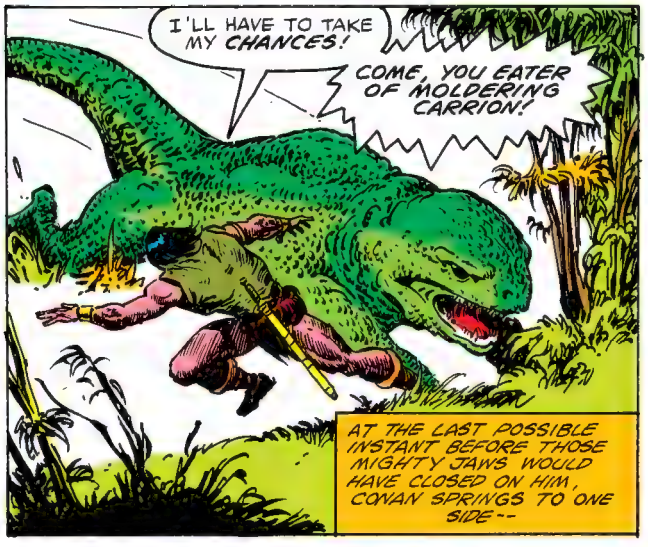
...BUT, I UNDERSTAND YOUR WORDS--MOST OF THEM--AND YOUR ARRIVAL AND VICTORY WERE TIMED BY THE GODS.
IF NOT FOR YOU, I WOULD HAVE SOON BEEN DEAD!
DID THEY MEAN TO SLAY YOU OR--?

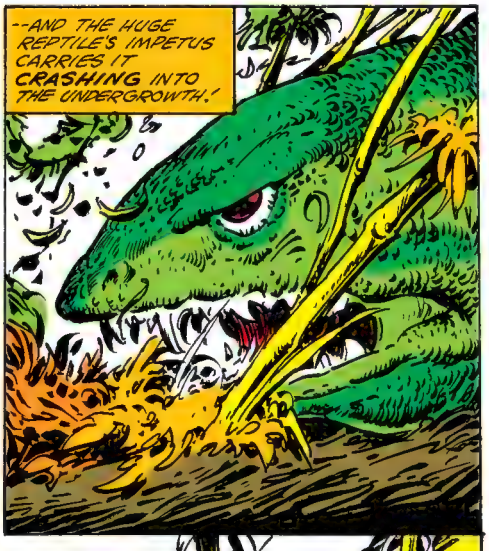
NAY! THEY WOULD HAVE LEFT ME, BOUND AS I WAS--
--HELPLESS PREY TO THE TERROR THAT THE EVIL YAH CHIENG HAS LET LOOSE IN THE JUNGLE.

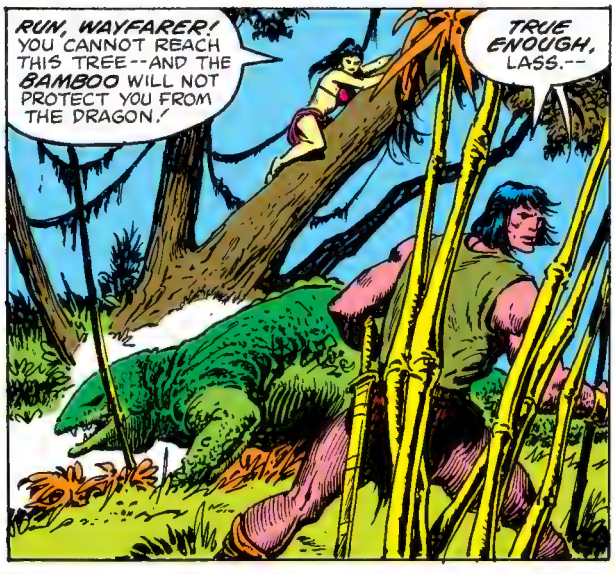

I'VE A DEBT TO SETTLE WITH THAT DOG --BUT WHAT IS THIS JUNGLE TERROR YOU SPEAK OF, GIRL?
NONE HAS LIVED TO TELL--THOUGH MEN SAY THE ARCH-WIZARD HAS CONJURED UP A MONSTER OUT OF THE FORGOTTEN AGES.
THE FAIREST WOMEN AND ABLEST MEN ARE TAKEN BY HIS SOLDIERS TO FEED THE MAW OF--
NO! NOOOO! DO YOU HEAR, MAN FROM BEYOND THE WALL?
SOMETHING CRASHING THROUGH THE TREES NOT FAR AWAY!
HOLD! THAT SHADOW--!

CROM!

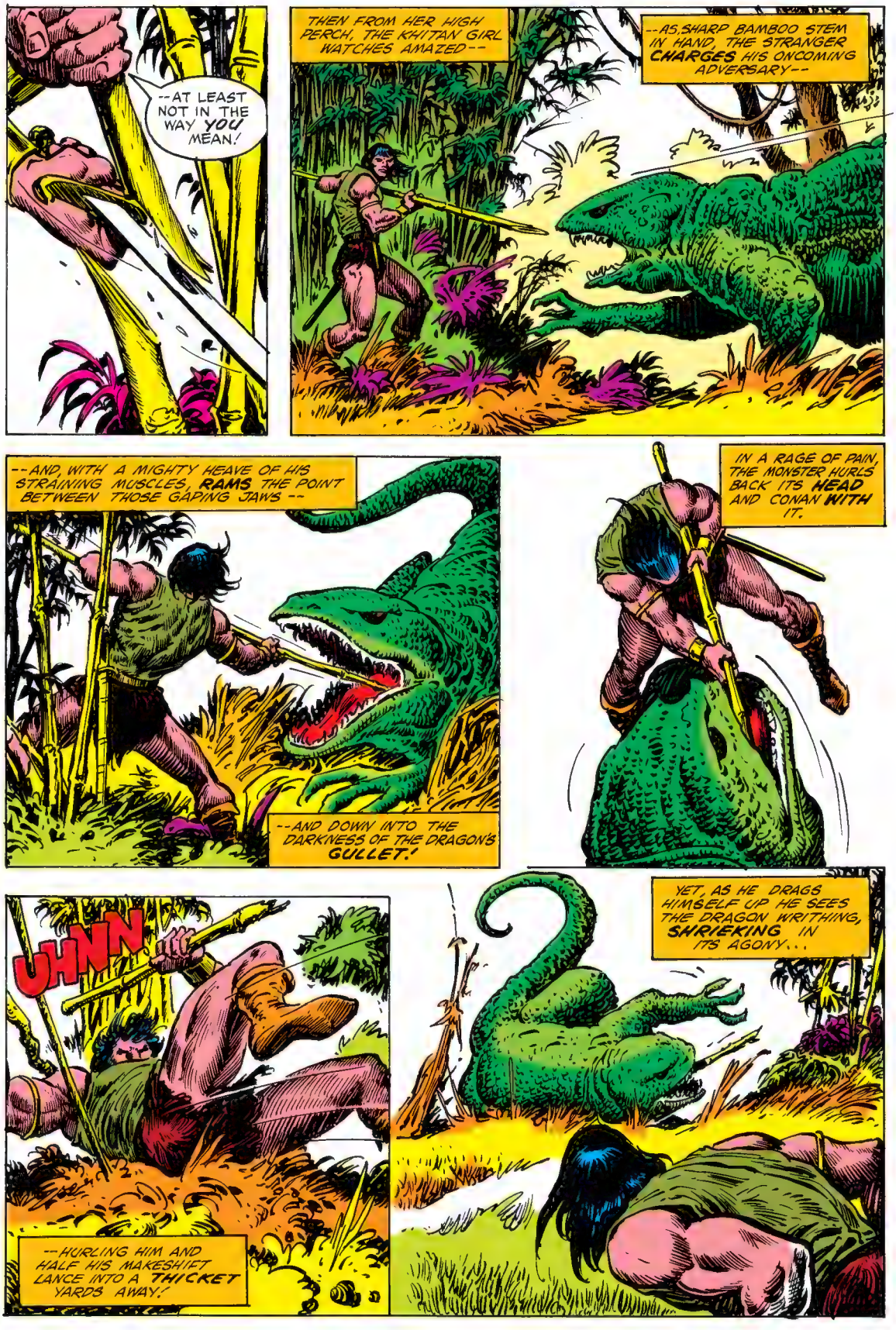

CLIMB THAT TREE, GIRL.
HUGE THOUGH HE BE, THE DRAGON CAN'T REACH YOU THERE!
BUT-- WHAT OF YOU--?


I'LL HAVE TO TAKE MY CHANCES!
COME, YOU EATER OF MOLDERING CARRION!
AT THE LAST POSSIBLE INSTANT BEFORE THOSE MIGHTY JAWS WOULD HAVE CLOSED ON HIM, CONAN SPRINGS TO ONE SIDE--

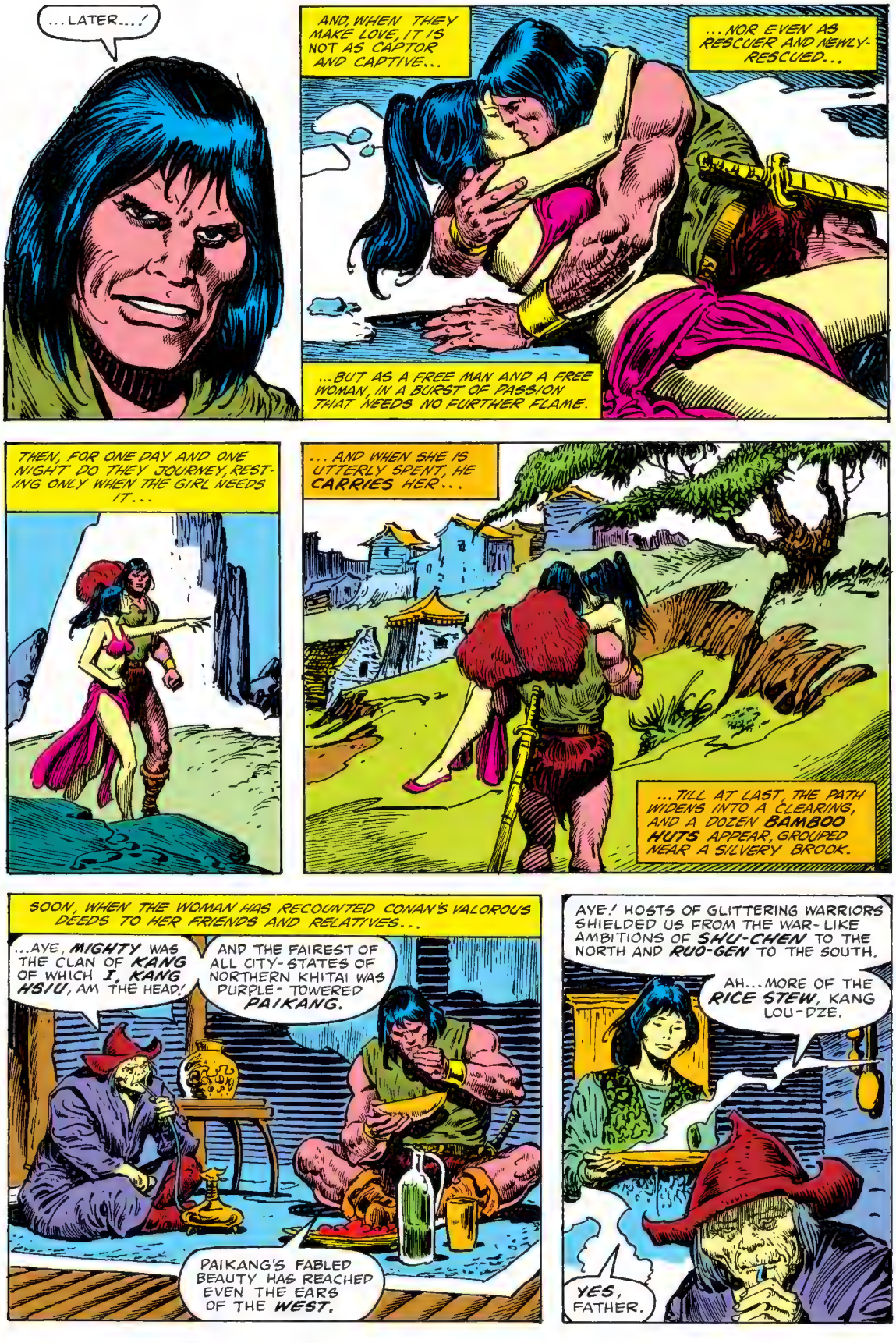

--AND THE HUGE REPTILE'S IMPETUS CARRIES IT CRASHING INTO THE UNDERGROWTH!

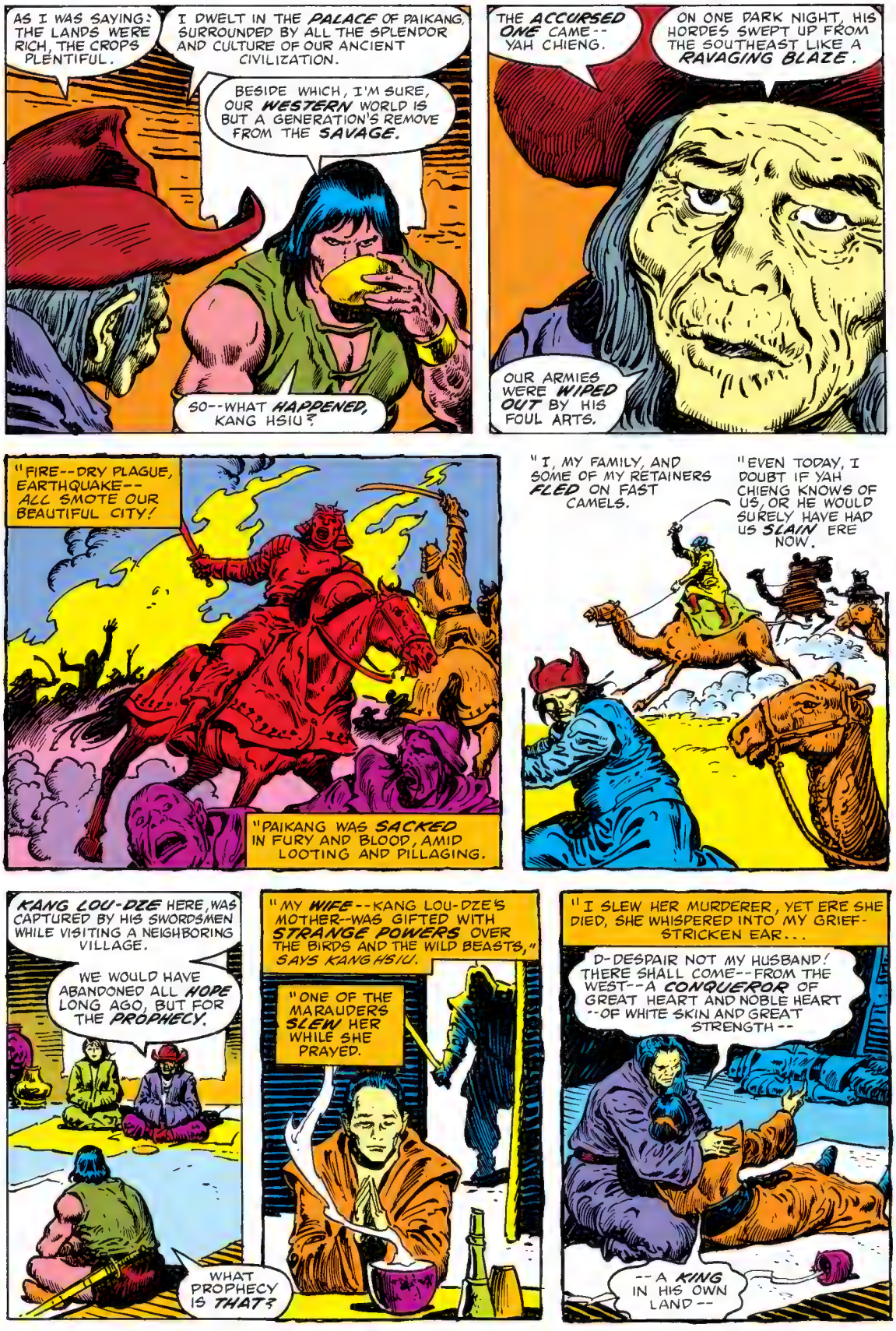

RUN, WAYFARER! YOU CANNOT REACH THIS TREE--AND THE BAMBOO WILL NOT PROTECT YOU FROM THE DRAGON!
TRUE ENOUGH, LASS.--

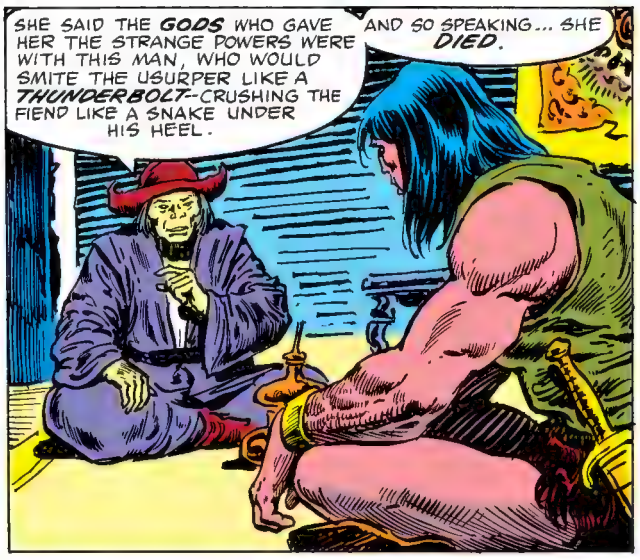
--BUT I DON'T INTEND TO HIDE BEHIND THE BAMBOO.

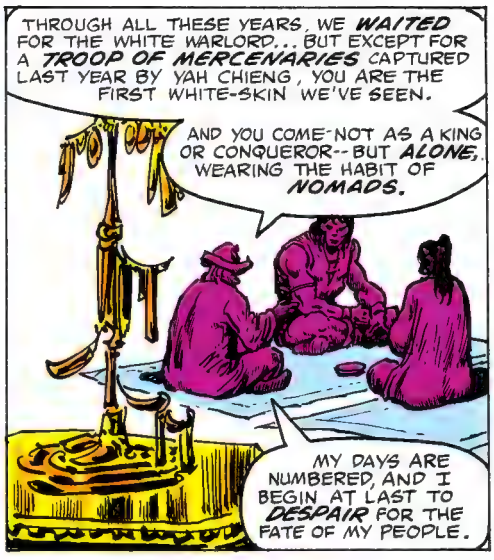

--AT LEAST NOT IN THE WAY YOU MEAN!
THEN FROM HER HIGH PERCH, THE KHITAN GIRL WATCHES AMAZED--
--AS, SHARP BAMBOO STEM IN HAND, THE STRANGER CHARGES HIS ONCOMING ADVERSARY--
--AND, WITH A MIGHTY HEAVE OF HIS STRAINING MUSCLES, RAMS THE POINT BETWEEN THOSE GAPING JAWS --
--AND DOWN INTO THE DARKNESS OF THE DRAGON'S GULLET!
IN A RAGE OF PAIN, THE MONSTER HURLS BACK ITS HEAD AND CONAN WITH IT.
JHNN
--HURLING HIM AND HALF HIS MAKESHIFT LANCE INTO A THICKET YARDS AWAY!
YET, AS HE DRAGS HIMSELF UP HE SEES THE DRAGON WRITHING, SHRIEKING IN ITS AGONY...

AND, STAYING CLEAR OF BOTH THRASHING TAIL AND SNAPPING JAWS--
--HE PUTS HIS WHOLE STRENGTH INTO ONE DESPERATE LUNGE FOR THE MONSTER'S EYE!
THE BLADE GOES IN LIKE A KNIFE THROUGH BUTTER--
--BUT AGAIN HE IS TOSSED INTO THE AIR--
--EVEN AS, WITH A FINAL TREMOR, THE HULK OF HIS TERRIBLE FOE SUBSIDES.
HMMMM... I MUST BE GROWING OLD.
A LITTLE FIGHT LIKE THAT WOULDN'T HAVE BOTHERED ME AT ALL IN THE OLD DAYS.
THE WORDS, HOWEVER, ARE ONLY THE BARBARIAN'S NAIVE WAY OF BELITTLING HIS FEAT...
... FOR HE KNOWS THERE WAS AS MUCH OF LUCK OR FATE IN HIS VICTORY AS ANYTHING ELSE.
YOU CAN COME DOWN NOW, LASS.
THE DEVIL ATE MORE BAMBOO THAN WAS GOOD FOR HIM.
NOW, LEAD ME TO THAT VILLAGE YOU SPOKE OF BEFORE.
I'LL NEED YOUR HELP, AS MUCH AS YOU DID MINE...

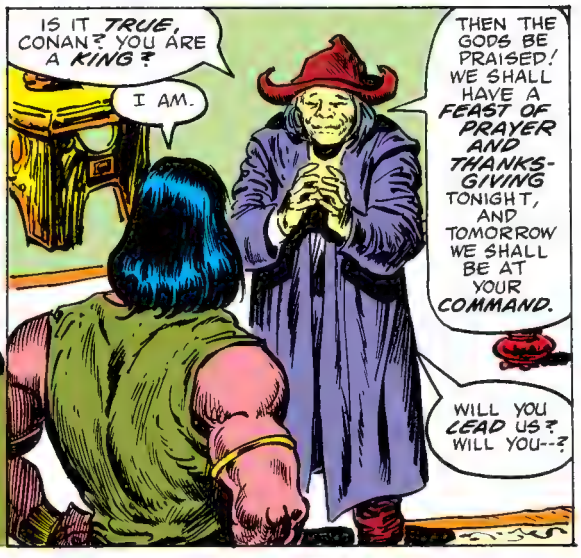

...LATER...!
AND, WHEN THEY MAKE LOVE, IT IS NOT AS CAPTOR AND CAPTIVE...
...NOR EVEN AS RESCUER AND NEWLY-RESCUED...
...BUT AS A FREE MAN AND A FREE WOMAN, IN A BURST OF PASSION THAT NEEDS NO FURTHER FLAME.
THEN, FOR ONE DAY AND ONE NIGHT DO THEY JOURNEY, RESTING ONLY WHEN THE GIRL NEEDS IT...
... AND WHEN SHE IS UTTERLY SPENT, HE CARRIES HER...
...TILL AT LAST, THE PATH WIDENS INTO A CLEARING, AND A DOZEN BAMBOO HUTS APPEAR, GROUPED NEAR A SILVERY BROOK.
SOON, WHEN THE WOMAN HAS RECOUNTED CONAN'S VALOROUS DEEDS TO HER FRIENDS AND RELATIVES...
...AYE, MIGHTY WAS THE CLAN OF KANG OF WHICH I, KANG HSIU, AM THE HEAD!
AND THE FAIREST OF ALL CITY-STATES OF NORTHERN KHITAI WAS PURPLE-TOWERED PAIKANG.
PAIKANG'S FABLED BEAUTY HAS REACHED EVEN THE EARS OF THE WEST.
AYE! HOSTS OF GLITTERING WARRIORS SHIELDED US FROM THE WAR-LIKE AMBITIONS OF SHU-CHEN TO THE NORTH AND RUO-GEN TO THE SOUTH.
AH... MORE OF THE RICE STEW, KANG LOU-DZE.
YES, FATHER.


AS I WAS SAYING: THE LANDS WERE RICH, THE CROPS PLENTIFUL.
I DWELT IN THE PALACE OF PAIKANG, SURROUNDED BY ALL THE SPLENDOR AND CULTURE OF OUR ANCIENT CIVILIZATION.
BESIDE WHICH, I'M SURE, OUR WESTERN WORLD IS BUT A GENERATION'S REMOVE FROM THE SAVAGE.
SO--WHAT HAPPENED, KANG HSIU?
THE ACCURSED ONE CAME-- YAH CHIENG.
ON ONE DARK NIGHT, HIS HORDES SWEPT UP FROM THE SOUTHEAST LIKE A RAVAGING BLAZE.
OUR ARMIES WERE WIPED OUT BY HIS FOUL ARTS.
"FIRE--DRY PLAGUE, EARTHQUAKE-- ALL SMOTE OUR BEAUTIFUL CITY!
"PAIKANG WAS SACKED IN FURY AND BLOOD, AMID LOOTING AND PILLAGING.
"I, MY FAMILY, AND SOME OF MY RETAINERS FLED ON FAST CAMELS.
"EVEN TODAY, I DOUBT IF YAH CHIENG KNOWS OF US, OR HE WOULD SURELY HAVE HAD US SLAIN ERE NOW.
KANG LOU-DZE HERE, WAS CAPTURED BY HIS SWORDSMEN WHILE VISITING A NEIGHBORING VILLAGE.
WE WOULD HAVE ABANDONED ALL HOPE LONG AGO, BUT FOR THE PROPHECY.
WHAT PROPHECY IS THAT?
"MY WIFE--KANG LOU-DZE'S MOTHER--WAS GIFTED WITH STRANGE POWERS OVER THE BIRDS AND THE WILD BEASTS," SAYS KANG HSIU.
"ONE OF THE MARAUDERS SLEW HER WHILE SHE PRAYED.
"I SLEW HER MURDERER, YET ERE SHE DIED, SHE WHISPERED INTO MY GRIEF-STRICKEN EAR...
D-DESPAIR NOT MY HUSBAND! THERE SHALL COME--FROM THE WEST--A CONQUEROR OF GREAT HEART AND NOBLE HEART --OF WHITE SKIN AND GREAT STRENGTH --
--A KING IN HIS OWN LAND--

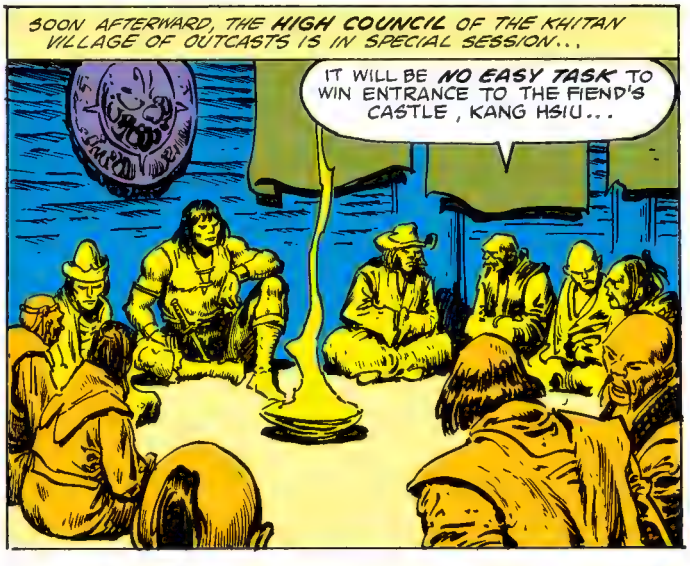

SHE SAID THE GODS WHO GAVE HER THE STRANGE POWERS WERE WITH THIS MAN, WHO WOULD SMITE THE USURPER LIKE A THUNDERBOLT--CRUSHING THE FIEND LIKE A SNAKE UNDER HIS HEEL.
AND SO SPEAKING... SHE DIED.


THROUGH ALL THESE YEARS, WE WAITED FOR THE WHITE WARLORD... BUT EXCEPT FOR A TROOP OF MERCENARIES CAPTURED LAST YEAR BY YAH CHIENG, YOU ARE THE FIRST WHITE-SKIN WE'VE SEEN.
AND YOU COME NOT AS A KING OR CONQUEROR--BUT ALONE, WEARING THE HABIT OF NOMADS.
MY DAYS ARE NUMBERED, AND I BEGIN AT LAST TO DESPAIR FOR THE FATE OF MY PEOPLE.

WHO SAID I'M NO KING, OLD MAN?
KING I AM--OF THE MIGHTIEST KINGDOM, OF THE WEST, FAIR AQUILONIA--CONQUERED IT BY MYSELF, I DID.
DON'T I FIT YOUR PRECIOUS PROPHECY?

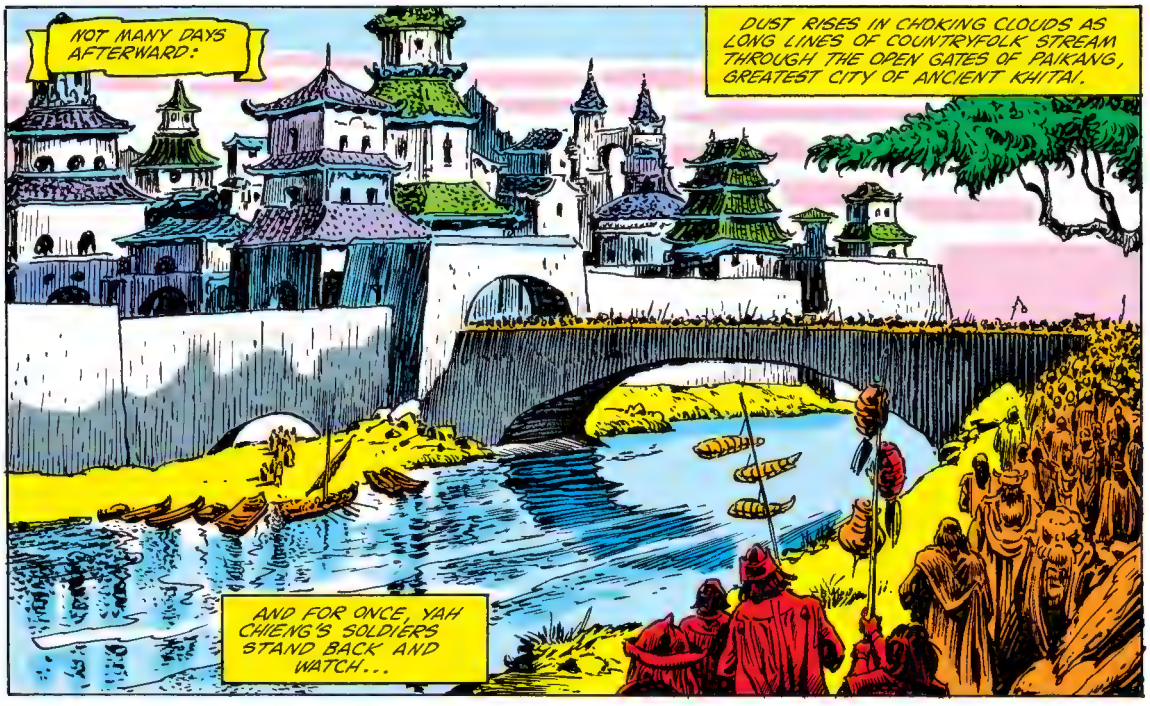

IS IT TRUE, CONAN? YOU ARE A KING?
I AM.
THEN THE GODS BE PRAISED! WE SHALL HAVE A FEAST OF PRAYER AND THANKSGIVING TONIGHT, AND TOMORROW WE SHALL BE AT YOUR COMMAND.
WILL YOU LEAD US? WILL YOU--?

NOT SO HOTLY, MY FRIEND. EVEN I AM NOT SO RASH AS TO RUSH INTO THE MAW OF THIS SCOUNDREL WITH ONLY A SCORE OF MEN.
THE GODS, I'VE FOUND, HELP THOSE WHO USE THEIR WITS.
WE MUST LAY OUR PLANS CAREFULLY...!

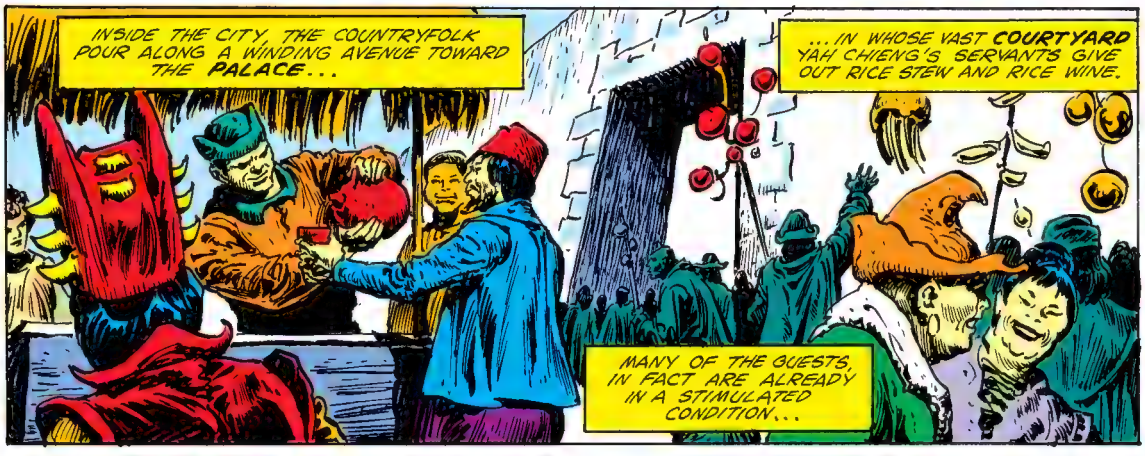

SOON AFTERWARD, THE HIGH COUNCIL OF THE KHITAN VILLAGE OF OUTCASTS IS IN SPECIAL SESSION...
IT WILL BE NO EASY TASK TO WIN ENTRANCE TO THE FIEND'S CASTLE, KANG HSIU...

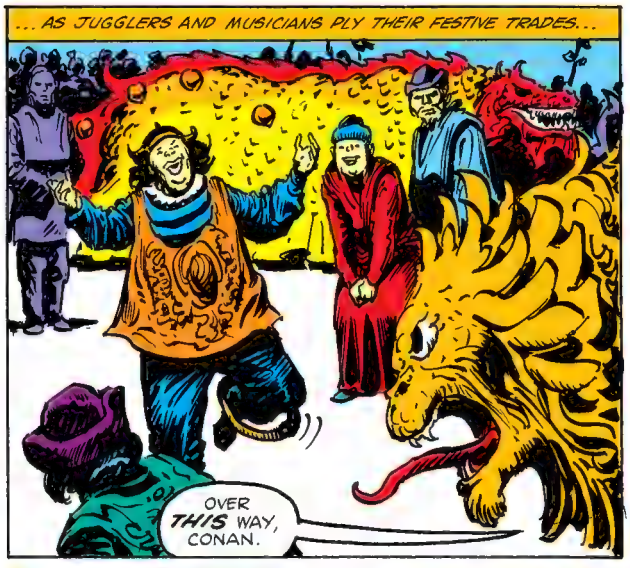
HIS CURSED SWORDSMEN GUARD IT DAY AND NIGHT... AND THERE ARE YAH CHIENG'S OWN UNEARTHLY POWERS IN THE BARGAIN.
THE PEOPLE OF PAIKANG HAVE NO WEAPONS, AND A STRAIGHTFORWARD ATTACK ON THE HEAVILY-FORTIFIED CITADEL IS IMPOSSIBLE WITH OUR SCANT FORCE.
YOU SPEAK TRUTH, LENG CHI--STEALTH AND TRICKERY PAVE THE ROAD TO SUCCESS.
IN A WEEK, YAH CHIENG WILL GIVE HIS ANNUAL FEAST IN CELEBRATION OF HIS CONQUEST OF PAIKANG.
THE CLIMAX OF THIS FEAST IS ALWAYS THE DANCE OF THE LIONS, PERFORMED WITH ALL THE ANCIENT CEREMONIES.
PERHAPS WE COULD SNEAK KING CONAN INTO THE CITY--CARRY HIM IN A BOX, OR--
NO EARLY COFFIN FOR ME, KANG HSIU!
WE WILL FIND A WAY TO GET ME INSIDE THE CITY, I ASSURE YOU, BUT ON MY OWN TWO FEET.
TELL ME OF THIS LION DANCE.
IT IS THE ONLY TIME WHEN PAIKANG'S GREAT GATES ARE OPENED AND THE PUBLIC IS ADMITTED INTO THE LARGE PALACE COURTYARD.
AND IN SHAULUN, A DAY'S JOURNEY HENCE, THERE IS A TEAM THAT GOES TO THE DANCE EVERY YEAR WITH THEIR LION DRESS.
WE WILL MAKE IT WORTH THEIR WHILE TO LET US BORROW IT.
PERHAPS IT WILL WORK, FOR YAH CHIENG OFTEN PLIES THE RABBLE WITH WINE, AND THERE ARISES SUCH CONFUSION THAT HIS SWORDSMEN MUST CHASE EVERYONE OUT WITH NAKED SWORDS.
BUT THIS TIME, HE WOULD MEET SOBER MEN WITH BLADES IN THEIR HANDS!
BUT HOW MANY MEN, O FOOLISH ONE?
AFTER ALL, YAH CHIENG HAS HIS FABLED TWO HUNDRED AT INSTANT CALL, BESIDES HIS REGULAR TROOPS.
AND EVEN IF SOME OF THE LATTER JOINED OUR SIDE IN THE FIGHT, WE HAVE BUT A FEW BITS OF ARMOR.
AYE -- WHILE THE TROOPS OF THE USURPER WILL BE SCALED AND PLATED LIKE THE CRAYFISH OF LAKE HO!
AND SO, THE ARGUMENT SWAYS, BACK AND FORTH--

--TILL SUDDENLY, CONAN SPEAKS UP IN A COMMANDING VOICE:
LORD KANG, YOU SAID SOMETHING TO ME BEFORE ABOUT A TROOP OF WESTERN MERCENARIES CAPTURED BY YAH CHIENG LAST YEAR.
TELL ME MORE OF THIS MATTER.
IT WAS IN THE MONTH OF THE HOG, CONAN OF AQUILONIA.
A COMPANY OF FIFTY CAME MARCHING OUT OF THE WEST--DESERTERS WHO HAD SERVED THE KING OF--WHAT WAS THE NAME OF THE KINGDOM, AGAIN?
TURAN.
TURAN, THAT IS IT! THEY HAD COME EASTWARD TO SEEK THEIR FORTUNES IN KHITAI.
THE VILLAGERS OF THESE PARTS FAVORED THEM BECAUSE THEY DID NOT LOOT AND PILLAGE.
THEY MARCHED ON TO PAIKANG AND OFFERED THEIR SWORDS TO YAH CHIENG.
HE FEASTED THEM--BUT LATER HE CUT OFF THEIR CAPTAIN'S HEAD AND CAST THE REST INTO HIS DUNGEON.
WHY DID HE DO THIS?
IT SEEMS HE WANTED THEM FOR SACRIFICES IN SOME GREAT RITE OF DEVILISH MAGIC.
AT LAST ACCOUNTS, THEY STILL AWAITED THEIR DOOM--THOUGH THAT WAS THREE MONTHS AGO.
THEN, AT CONAN'S BEHEST, KANG HSIU BEGINS DRAWING LINES ON THE EARTHEN FLOOR...
OF COURSE, THE USURPER MAY HAVE CHANGED THINGS SINCE I DWELT THEREIN, BUT...
HOURS LATER, WHEN PLANS HAVE BEEN MADE DOWN TO THE LAST DETAIL...
TO THE FUTURE AND HONOR OF GREAT, PAIKANG--
--AND MAY THE HEAD OF THE SNAKE BE CRUSHED UNDER THE BOOT OF THE AVENGER!
I'LL DRINK TO THAT!
AND, AS AN ANSWERING SHOUT GOES UP, CONAN DRINKS--HIS BRAIN WHIRLING.
AT LAST, HE IS WITHIN REACH OF HIS GOAL--AND PERHAPS HIS QUEEN!

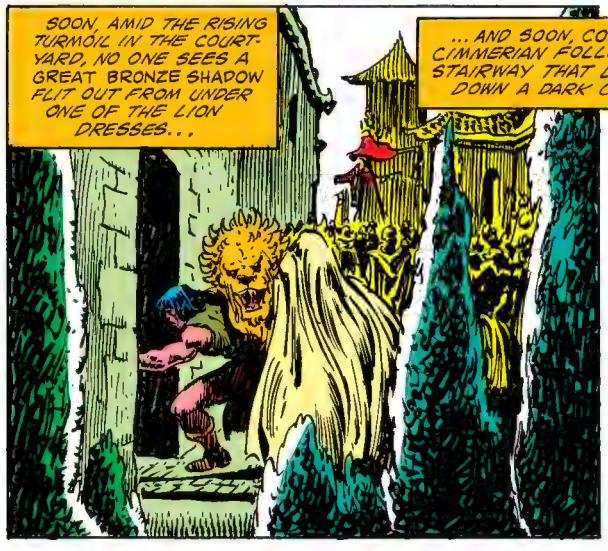

NOT MANY DAYS AFTERWARD:
DUST RISES IN CHOKING CLOUDS AS LONG LINES OF COUNTRYFOLK STREAM THROUGH THE OPEN GATES OF PAIKANG, GREATEST CITY OF ANCIENT KHITAI.
AND FOR ONCE, YAH CHIENG'S SOLDIERS STAND BACK AND WATCH...

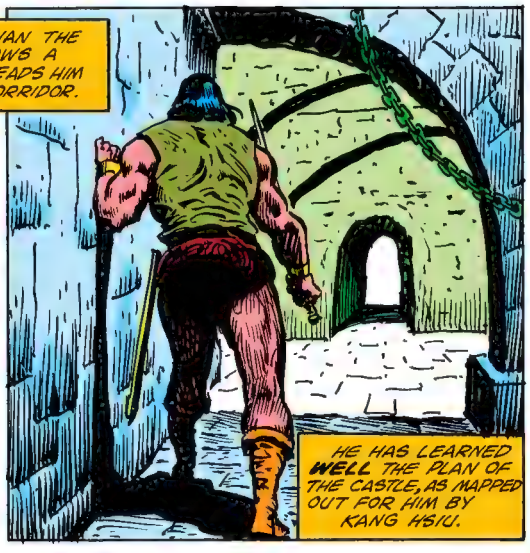
NOW AND THEN, THE DRAB COLUMNS ENTERING ARE LIGHTED BY BRILLIANT COSTUMES--AND THE LION DANCERS OF SHAULUN MAKE AN ESPECIALLY FINE SHOW.

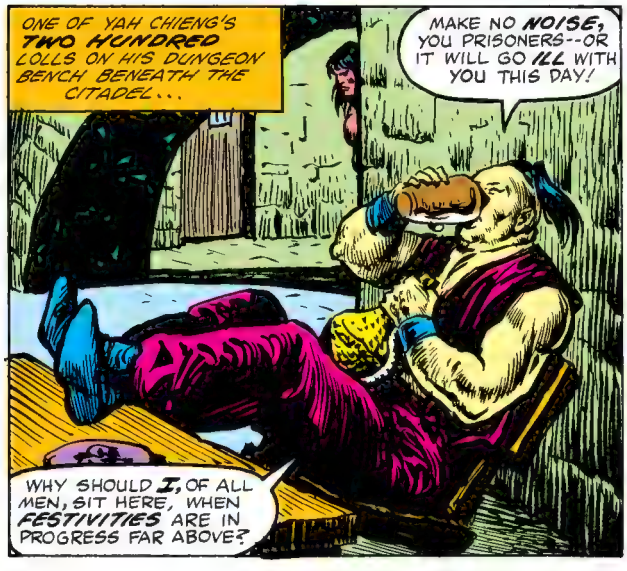

INSIDE THE CITY, THE COUNTRYFOLK POUR ALONG A WINDING AVENUE TOWARD THE PALACE...
...IN WHOSE VAST COURTYARD YAH CHIENG'S SERVANTS GIVE OUT RICE STEW AND RICE WINE.
MANY OF THE GUESTS, IN FACT ARE ALREADY IN A STIMULATED CONDITION...


...AS JUGGLERS AND MUSICIANS PLY THEIR FESTIVE TRADES...
OVER THIS WAY, CONAN.

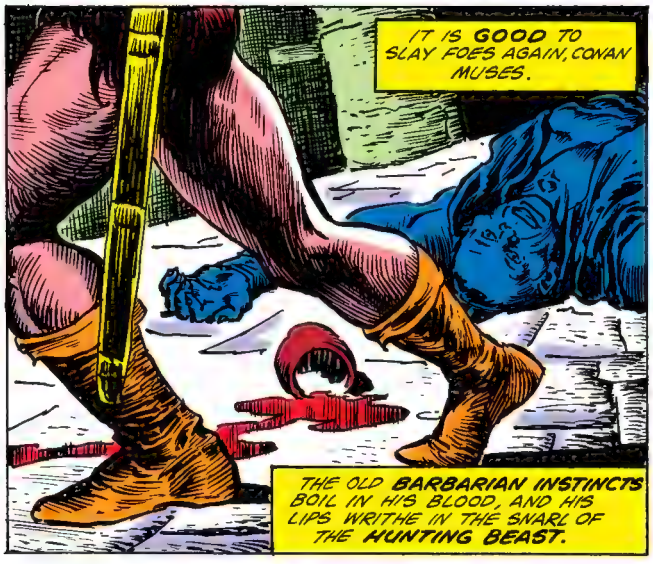
THE DANCING WILL SOON BEGIN... BUT BE NOT SO PROFICIENT AS TO WIN THE PRIZE.
IT WOULD NOT ADVANCE OUR PLANS TO HAVE THE JUDGE DEMAND THAT WE DOFF YOUR HEADPIECE TO RECEIVE IT.
THAT IT WOULD NOT, LENG CHI.


SOON, AMID THE RISING TURMOIL IN THE COURTYARD, NO ONE SEES A GREAT BRONZE SHADOW FLIT OUT FROM UNDER ONE OF THE LION DRESSES...


...AND SOON, CONAN THE CIMMERIAN FOLLOWS A STAIRWAY THAT LEADS HIM DOWN A DARK CORRIDOR.
HE HAS LEARNED WELL THE PLAN OF THE CASTLE, AS MAPPED OUT FOR HIM BY KANG HSIU.


ONE OF YAH CHIENG'S TWO HUNDRED LOLLS ON HIS DUNGEON BENCH BENEATH THE CITADEL...
MAKE NO NOISE, YOU PRISONERS--OR IT WILL GO ILL WITH YOU THIS DAY!
WHY SHOULD I, OF ALL MEN, SIT HERE, WHEN FESTIVITIES ARE IN PROGRESS FAR ABOVE?

IF I HAD MY WAY I'D HAVE ALREADY SLAUGHTERED THE WHOLE LOT OF--
RRRGGK--!


IT IS GOOD TO SLAY FOES AGAIN, CONAN MUSES.
THE OLD BARBARIAN INSTINCTS BOIL IN HIS BLOOD, AND HIS LIPS WRITHE IN THE SNARL OF THE HUNTING BEAST.

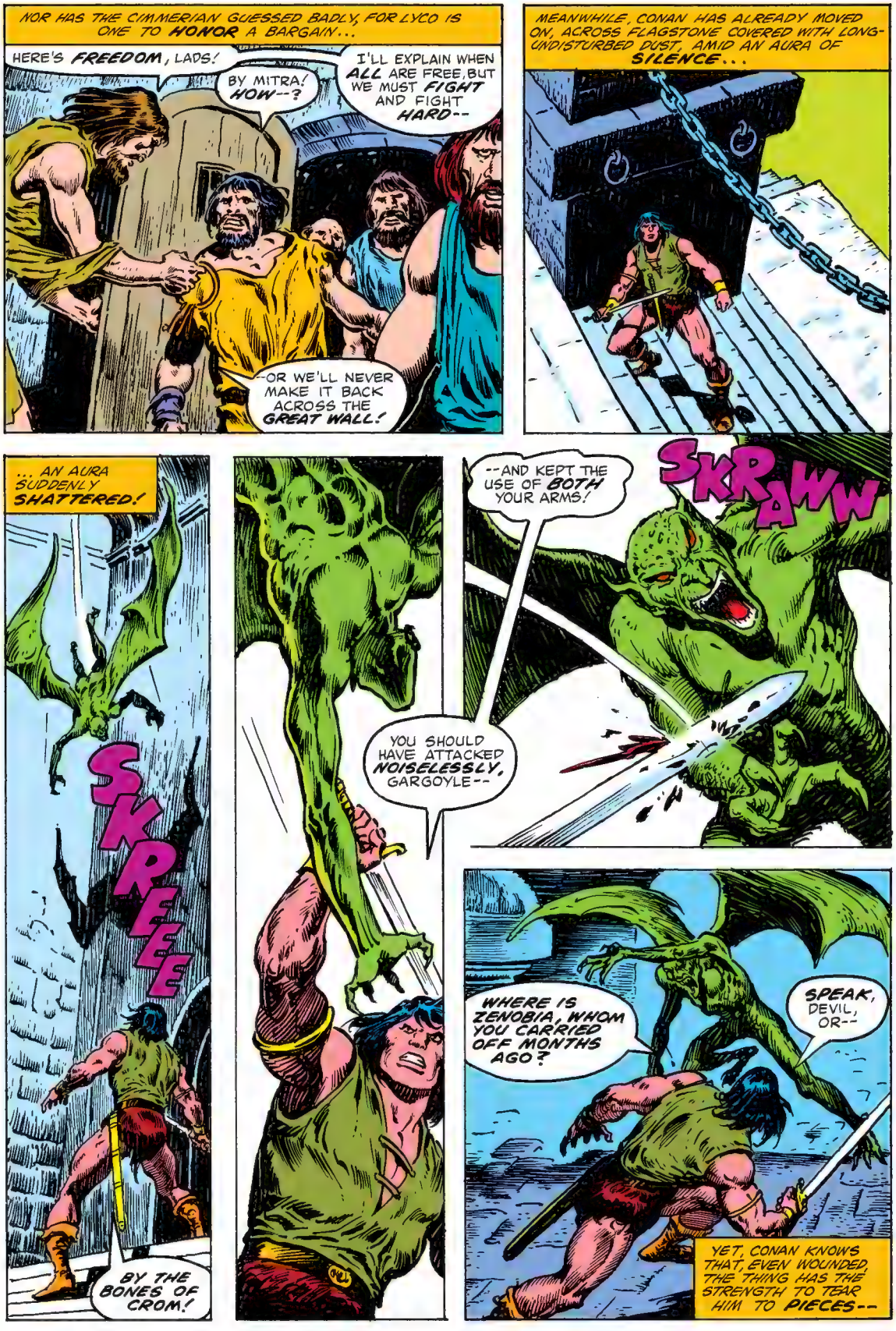
NOW, IF HE CAN JUST TALK SOME SENSE INTO THE IMPRISONED TURANIANS--!
HO, INSIDE THERE--I'M UNLOCKING YOUR CELL DOOR.

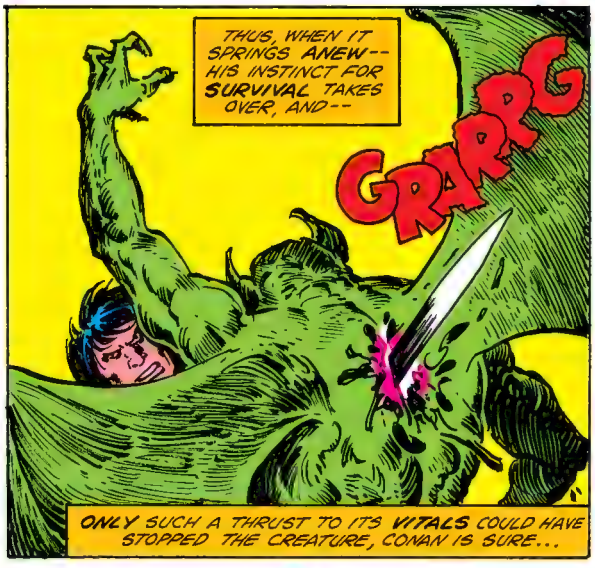
BUT HEAR MY WORDS, OR I'LL--
CONAN! BLESS MY KOTHIAN COLLARBONE!
MITRA! LYCO OF KHORSHEMISH! IS THAT YOU
I SIGN ON WITH TURANIAN MERCENARIES -- GET TOSSED IN A CELL IN KHITAI--AND RESCUED BY A CIMMERIAN. *
* LIKE MOST MEN OF HIS TIME, LYCO HAS NO WAY OF KNOWING THAT THIS IS THE SAME CONAN WHO IS KING OF AQUILONIA --LOUISE.

BY ISHTAR--ARE YOU HERE WITH AN OUTLAW HOST TO DEAL WITH THAT DEVIL YAH CHIENG? OR HAVE YOU FLOWN ON THE BACK OF AN EAGLE?
NEITHER, OLD COMRADE, I'M AFTER THE USURPER, YES...
BUT I'VE COUNTED ON FINDING MY ARMY HERE! HAVE I?

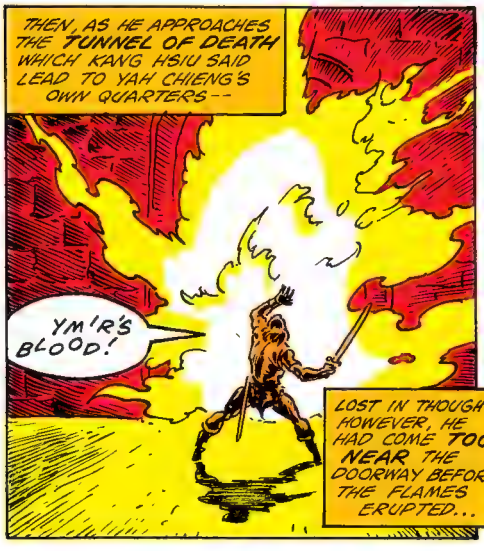
AYE, BY THE GODS! MOST OF THE PRISONERS HERE--FROM EVERY LAND EAST OF VENDHYA--LONG ONLY TO FLESH THEIR STEEL IN KHITAN BRAVOS!
YOU'LL ALL HAVE YOUR CHANCE! FREE THE MEN--EQUIP THEM FROM THE ARMORY DOWN YONDER CORRIDOR.
STRIKE TO AVENGE YOUR OWN SUFFERING--AND TO FREE THE QUEEN OF AQUILONIA!

YOU'LL FIND KHITAN ALLIES AMONG THE THRONG IN THE COURTYARD.
NOW GO, SWIFTLY!
A MAD ONE, THIS BARBARIAN--TRAVELING ACROSS THE WORLD TO RESCUE A WOMAN!
STILL ADMIRATION GLOWS IN THE KOTHIAN'S EYES AS CONAN STRIDES OFF...


NOR HAS THE CIMMERIAN GUESSED BADLY, FOR LYCO IS ONE TO HONOR A BARGAIN...
HERE'S FREEDOM, LADS!
BY MITRA! HOW--?
I'LL EXPLAIN WHEN ALL ARE FREE, BUT WE MUST FIGHT AND FIGHT HARD--
--OR WE'LL NEVER MAKE IT BACK ACROSS THE GREAT WALL!
MEANWHILE, CONAN HAS ALREADY MOVED ON, ACROSS FLAGSTONE COVERED WITH LONG-UNDISTURBED DUST, AMID AN AURA OF SILENCE...
... AN AURA SUDDENLY SHATTERED!
SKREEE
BY THE BONES OF CROM!
YOU SHOULD HAVE ATTACKED NOISELESSLY, GARGOYLE--
--AND KEPT THE USE OF BOTH YOUR ARMS!
SKRAWW
WHERE IS ZENOBIA, WHOM YOU CARRIED OFF MONTHS AGO?
SPEAK, DEVIL, OR--
YET, CONAN KNOWS THAT, EVEN WOUNDED, THE THING HAS THE STRENGTH TO TEAR HIM TO PIECES--

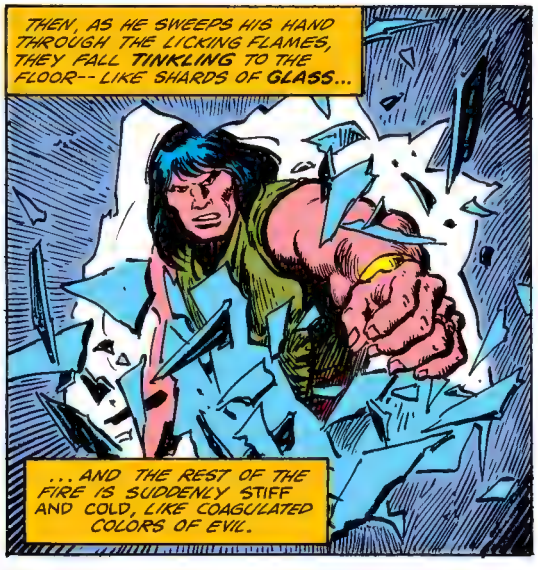

THUS, WHEN IT SPRINGS ANEW-- HIS INSTINCT FOR SURVIVAL TAKES OVER, AND--
GRARRG
ONLY SUCH A THRUST TO ITS VITALS COULD HAVE STOPPED THE CREATURE, CONAN IS SURE...

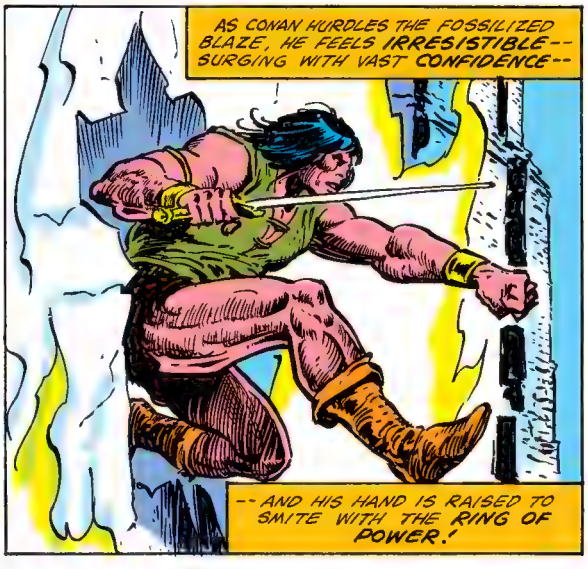
YET, EVEN SO, AS HE STALKS ONWARD, HE WISHES IT HAD SPOKEN BEFORE IT DIED.
IS ZENOBIA, TOO, ALREADY DEAD? PERHAPS VICTIM OF SOME EARLIER SACRIFICE BY THE HUMAN MONSTER CALLED YAH CHIENG?
FOR THE FIRST TIME, CONAN CANNOT STOP HIMSELF FROM CONSIDERING THAT POSSIBILITY.

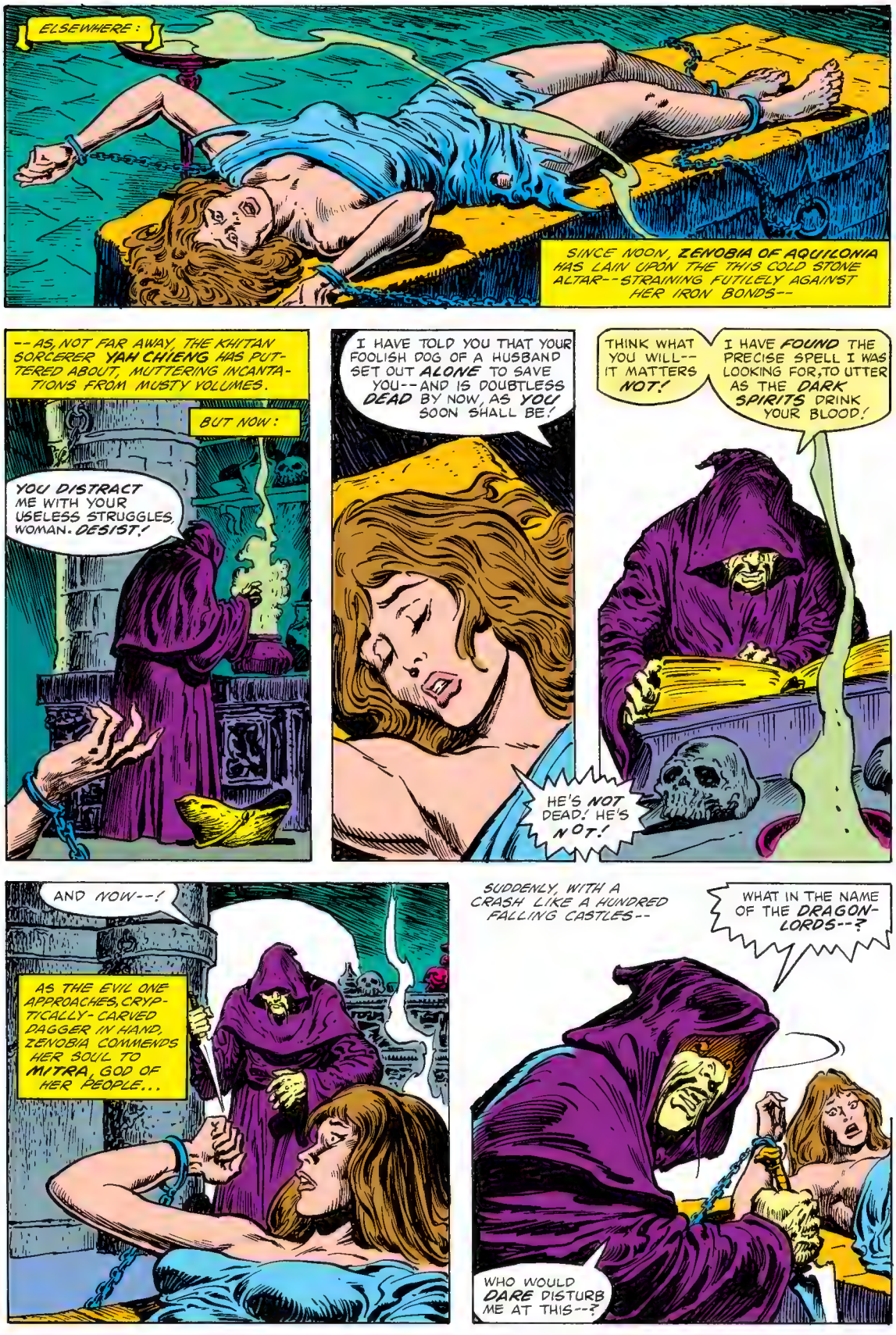

THEN, AS HE APPROACHES THE TUNNEL OF DEATH WHICH KANG HSIU SAID LEAD TO YAH CHIENG'S OWN QUARTERS--
YMIR'S BLOOD!
LOST IN THOUGHT, HOWEVER, HE HAD COME TOO NEAR THE DOORWAY BEFORE THE FLAMES ERUPTED...

AND EVEN AS HE RAISES HIS HAND--THE FIRE DOES NOT SEAR HIM.!

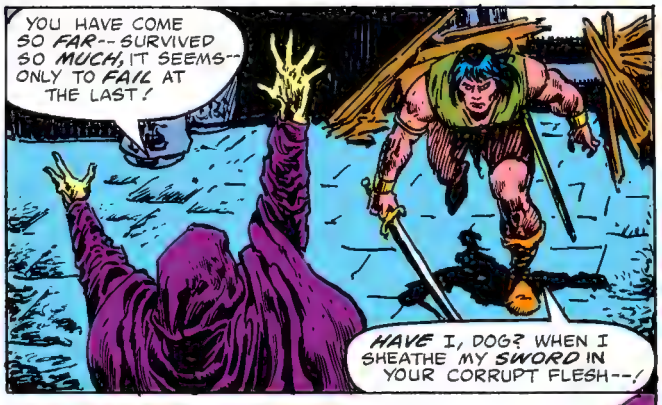
ONCE AGAIN-- THE RING OF RAKHAMON, GIVEN HIM BY THE WIZARD PELIAS!

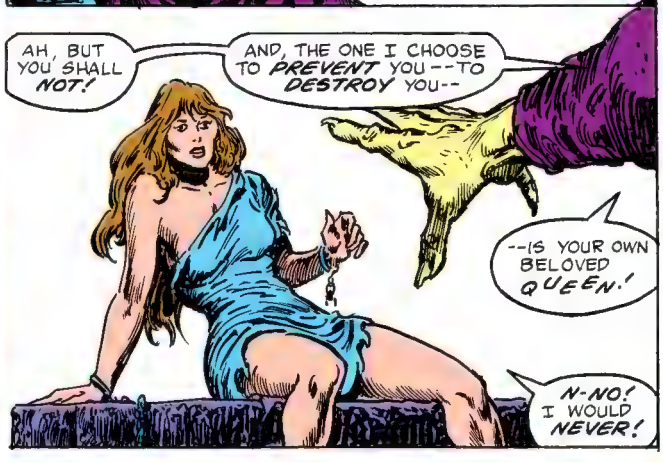

THEN, AS HE SWEEPS HIS HAND THROUGH THE LICKING FLAMES, THEY FALL TINKLING TO THE FLOOR--LIKE SHARDS OF GLASS...
...AND THE REST OF THE FIRE IS SUDDENLY STIFF AND COLD, LIKE COAGULATED COLORS OF EVIL.

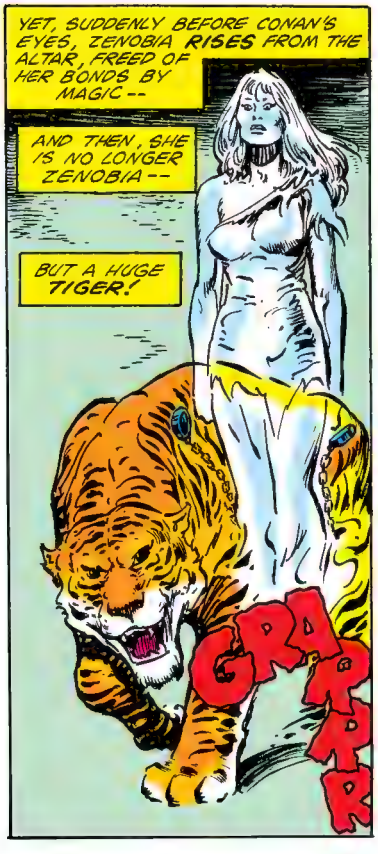

AS CONAN HURDLES THE FOSSILIZED BLAZE, HE FEELS IRRESISTIBLE-- SURGING WITH VAST CONFIDENCE--
--AND HIS HAND IS RAISED TO SMITE WITH THE RING OF POWER!


ELSEWHERE:
SINCE NOON, ZENOBIA OF AQUILONIA HAS LAIN UPON THIS COLD STONE ALTAR--STRAINING FUTILELY AGAINST HER IRON BONDS--
--AS, NOT FAR AWAY, THE KHITAN SORCERER YAH CHIENG HAS PUTTERED ABOUT, MUTTERING INCANTATIONS FROM MUSTY VOLUMES.
BUT NOW:
YOU DISTRACT ME WITH YOUR USELESS STRUGGLES, WOMAN. DESIST!
I HAVE TOLD YOU THAT YOUR FOOLISH DOG OF A HUSBAND SET OUT ALONE TO SAVE YOU--AND IS DOUBTLESS DEAD BY NOW, AS YOU SOON SHALL BE!
THINK WHAT YOU WILL--IT MATTERS NOT!
I HAVE FOUND THE PRECISE SPELL I WAS LOOKING FOR, TO UTTER AS THE DARK SPIRITS DRINK YOUR BLOOD!
HE'S NOT DEAD! HE'S NOT!
AND NOW--!
AS THE EVIL ONE APPROACHES, CRYPTICALLY-CARVED DAGGER IN HAND, ZENOBIA COMMENDS HER SOUL TO MITRA, GOD OF HER PEOPLE...
SUDDENLY, WITH A CRASH LIKE A HUNDRED FALLING CASTLES--
WHAT IN THE NAME OF THE DRAGON-LORDS--?
WHO WOULD DARE DISTURB ME AT THIS--?

THAT IS ONLY THE TINIEST PORTION OF WHAT I HAVE DARED, YAH CHIENG!
CONAN! MY CONAN!


YOU HAVE COME SO FAR--SURVIVED SO MUCH, IT SEEMS--ONLY TO FAIL AT THE LAST!
HAVE I, DOG? WHEN I SHEATHE MY SWORD IN YOUR CORRUPT FLESH--!


AH, BUT YOU SHALL NOT!
AND, THE ONE I CHOOSE TO PREVENT YOU--TO DESTROY YOU--
--IS YOUR OWN BELOVED QUEEN.!
N-NO! I WOULD NEVER!


YET, SUDDENLY BEFORE CONAN'S EYES, ZENOBIA RISES FROM THE ALTAR, FREED OF HER BONDS BY MAGIC--
AND THEN, SHE IS NO LONGER ZENOBIA--
BUT A HUGE TIGER!
GRRRRR

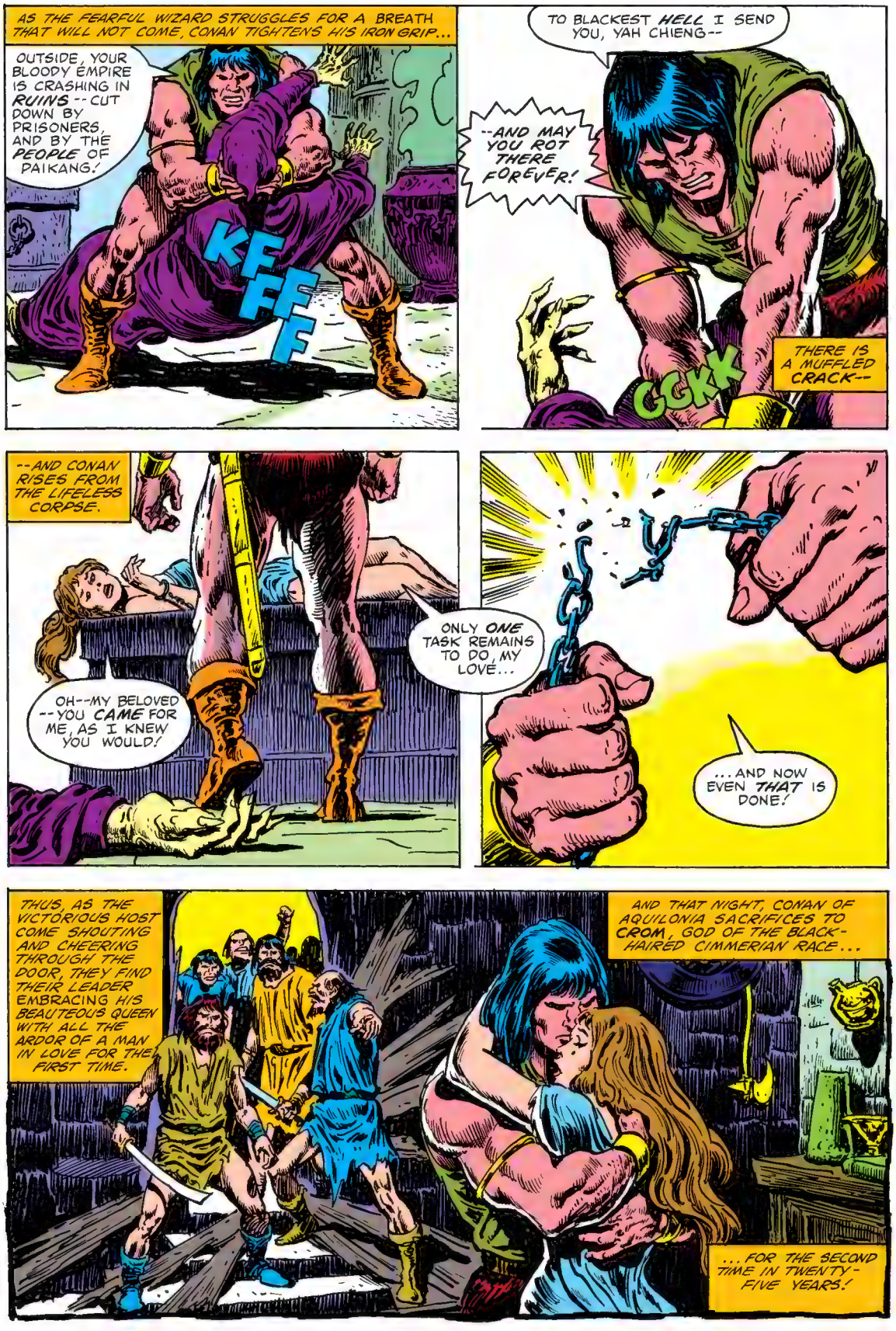
AS THE GREAT CAT SPRINGS, CONAN PAUSES, UNCERTAIN WHETHER TO STRIKE OR NO--

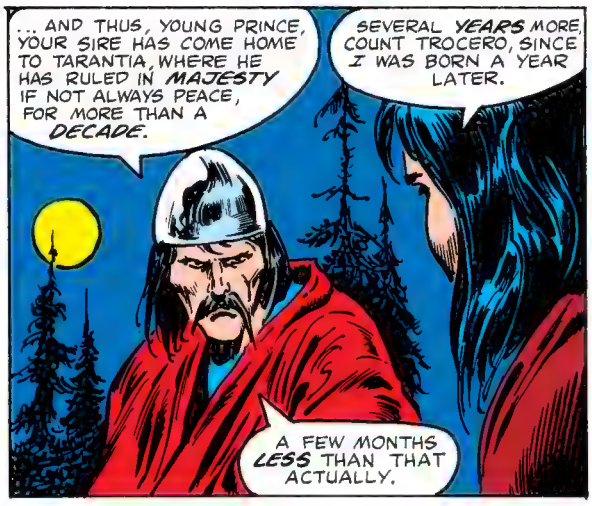
--AND THEN, THE TIGER HAS CHANGED INTO A MOLDERING SKELETON, ITS BONY HAND GRIPPING HIS WRIST WITH A NUMBING CLUTCH!
NO!

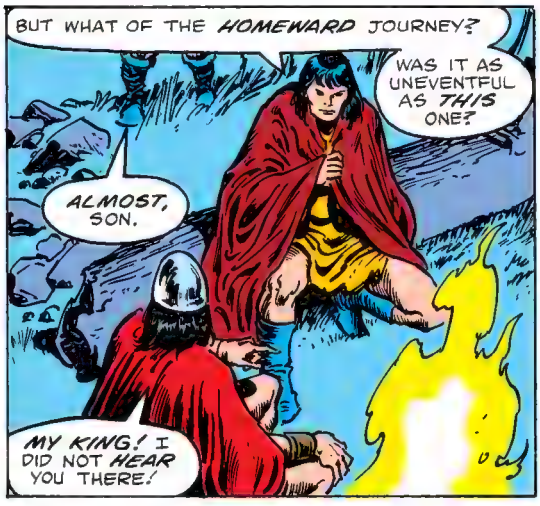
YOU ARE NOT ZENOBIA, THOUGH I SAW HER CHANGE INTO A TIGER AND THE TIGER TO YOU!
YOU'RE NOT ZENOBIA!
YOU'RE NOT!
AS HE STRIKES OUT, HE FEELS A BURNING SENSATION UPON ONE OF HIS FINGERS--
THE RING OF RAKHAMON!
ARRH-!
AWAY WITH THIS FOUL SIZZLING THING!
THEN COMES A RINGING PEAL OF EVIL LAUGHTER FROM THE LIPS OF YAH CHIENG...
MY MAGICAL SUGGESTION MADE YOU DO, FOOL, WHAT YOU SHOULD NEVER HAVE DONE--
--RELEASE THE RING GIVEN YOU BY MY OLD ENEMY PELIAS!
NOW YOU BELONG TO ME--AND TO DEATH!
A MIST RISES FROM THE FLOOR AROUND THE CIMMERIAN AND HE CANNOT MOVE!
NOW, HE BEGINS TO SEE VISIONS IN THE SHIFTING BLUE WISPS --
--AND ALL THE MONSTERS FEARED BY MAN SINCE FIRST HE CRAWLED FROM THE SEA WHIRL IN ENDLESS SUCCESSION BEFORE HIS SIGHT!

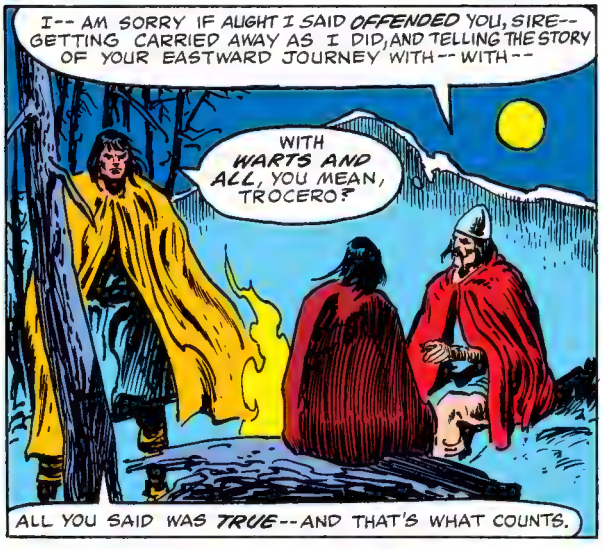
THEIR STRANGLING HANDS REACH OUT TO CRUSH HIS THROAT--
THEIR GLOWING EYES SEEK TO DRAW THE VERY SOUL FROM HIS BODY, DOWN TO HELL AND DAMNATION.
--AND HE IS SUDDENLY OVERWHELMED BY THE CERTAINTY OF DEFEAT.
DARKNESS AND EVIL WILL TRIUMPH IN THE WORLD, DESPITE ALL OF HIS BATTLES--
-- AS HE FEELS THE LAST STRAINS OF CONSCIOUSNESS SLIPPING FROM HIM --
AND THEN, INEXPLICABLY, HE IS PULLED AWAY FROM THAT ENSORCELED, DEMONIAC GRIP--
--AND IT SEEMS TO CONAN, THAT HE IS SOMEPLACE ELSE ENTIRELY... WITHIN...
...A GREAT AND GLOOMY HALL OF LOGS WHERE DARK AND SOMBER MEN STAND ABOUT--A THRONE.
AND ON THAT THRONE SITS A BLACK-HAIRED KING TALL AND MOODY-- WITH BLACK EYES IN AN AUSTERE AND MERCILESS FACE AND A VOICE REACHING OUT TO HIS MIND:
MAN OF CIMMERIA-- DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM?
NO, I --YES! YES!
YOU ARE-- CROM, LORD OF THE MOUND --AND GOD OF THE CIMMERIANS.

AYE--I AM CROM WHOM YOU HAVE EVER SWORN BY BUT NEVER WORSHIPPED.
YET, YOU ARE A SON OF CROM--AND I WILL NOT LET YOU SUFFER ETERNAL DAMNATION.
YOU HAVE ALWAYS BEEN TRUE TO ME IN YOUR HEART--AND THE BLACK ARTS OF THE EAST SHALL NOT HAVE YOUR SOUL!
AS THE GREAT LIGHTS BURSTS FROM THAT OUT-STRETCHED HAND, CONAN SUDDENLY FEELS ALL HIS OLD POWER SURGE BACK INTO HIS BODY--
--THE BLUE MIST AND THE DEMONS THEREIN FALLING FROM HIM LIKE THE LAST LEAVES OF AUTUMN.
AND HE IS ONCE MORE IN THE SACRIFICIAL CHAMBER OF YAH CHIENG!
NO! YOU CANNOT HAVE ESCAPED THE DOOM OF THE BLUE MIST!
BUT I HAVE, YOU KHITAN DOG!
THEN YOU SHALL SAVOR YOUR TRIUMPH--
--ALONE!
MMOOO
IT'S TOO LATE FOR YOU, YAH CHIENG!
THE VERY GODS HAVE DOOMED YOU--AND YOUR DARK POWERS ALL ARE BROKEN!
UNNGH

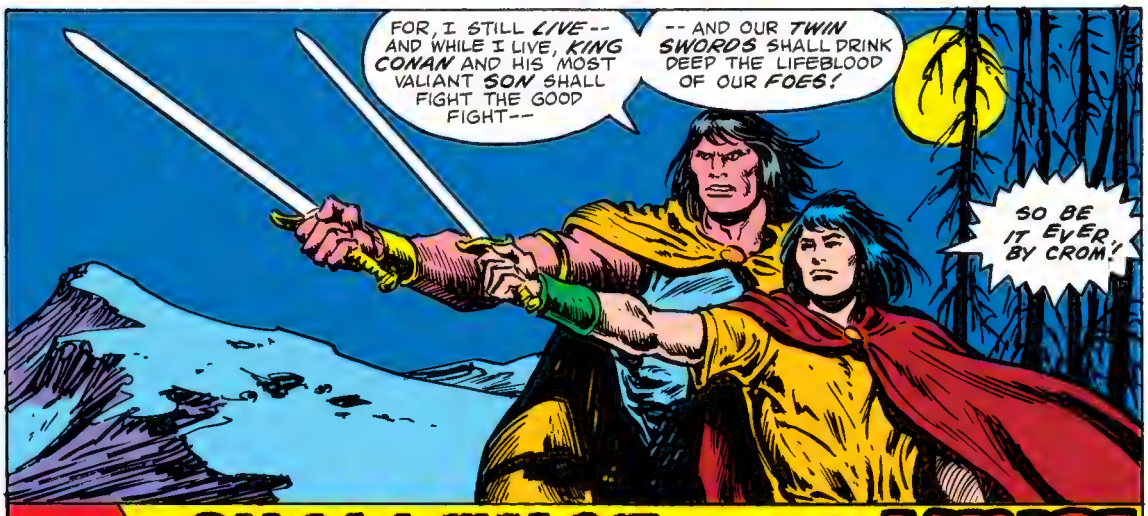

AS THE FEARFUL WIZARD STRUGGLES FOR A BREATH THAT WILL NOT COME, CONAN TIGHTENS HIS IRON GRIP...
OUTSIDE, YOUR BLOODY EMPIRE IS CRASHING IN RUINS -- CUT DOWN BY PRISONERS, AND BY THE PEOPLE OF PAIKANG!
KFFFF
TO BLACKEST HELL I SEND YOU, YAH CHIENG--
--AND MAY YOU ROT THERE FOREVER!
GGKK
THERE IS A MUFFLED CRACK--
--AND CONAN RISES FROM THE LIFELESS CORPSE.
OH--MY BELOVED --YOU CAME FOR ME, AS I KNEW YOU WOULD!
ONLY ONE TASK REMAINS TO DO, MY LOVE...
...AND NOW EVEN THAT IS DONE!
THUS, AS THE VICTORIOUS HOST COME SHOUTING AND CHEERING THROUGH THE DOOR, THEY FIND THEIR LEADER EMBRACING HIS BEAUTEOUS QUEEN WITH ALL THE ARDOR OF A MAN IN LOVE FOR THE FIRST TIME.
AND THAT NIGHT, CONAN OF AQUILONIA SACRIFICES TO CROM, GOD OF THE BLACK-HAIRED CIMMERIAN RACE...
...FOR THE SECOND TIME IN TWENTY-FIVE YEARS!


... AND THUS, YOUNG PRINCE, YOUR SIRE HAS COME HOME TO TARANTIA, WHERE HE HAS RULED IN MAJESTY IF NOT ALWAYS PEACE, FOR MORE THAN A DECADE.
SEVERAL YEARS MORE, COUNT TROCERO, SINCE I WAS BORN A YEAR LATER.
A FEW MONTHS LESS THAN THAT ACTUALLY.





I-- AM SORRY IF ALIGHT I SAID OFFENDED YOU, SIRE-- GETTING CARRIED AWAY AS I DID, AND TELLING THE STORY OF YOUR EASTWARD JOURNEY WITH-- WITH--
WITH WARTS AND ALL, YOU MEAN, TROCERO?
ALL YOU SAID WAS TRUE--AND THAT'S WHAT COUNTS.

AND IT ALL MAKES A MOST GLORIOUS HERITAGE, FATHER--ONE I SHALL STRIVE TO LIVE UP TO, ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE!
I DOUBT IT NOT, CONN... I DOUBT IT NOT.
BE NOT TOO QUICK, HOWEVER, TO SPEAK OF ME AS A RELIC OF THE LEGEND-LADEN PAST...


FOR, I STILL LIVE-- AND WHILE I LIVE, KING CONAN AND HIS MOST VALIANT SON SHALL FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT--
-- AND OUR TWIN SWORDS SHALL DRINK DEEP THE LIFEBLOOD OF OUR FOES!
SO BE IT EVER, BY CROM!

NEXT: **CHALLENGE FOR A KING!**

*AN **ALL-NEW, ORIGINAL** ADVENTURE OF CONAN AND CONN!*

# KING CONAN

c/o MARVEL COMICS GROUP
575 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10022

LOUISE JONES
EDITOR
DANNY FINGEROTH
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Dear people,

KING CONAN #6 (featuring part two of your CONAN THE AVENGER adaptation) was typically good Conan. The novel has plenty of action and intrigue along with barbaric elements, a mix which has made Conan my favorite hero for the last eight years.

The comic-book adaptation stays close to the novel, with a certain amount of scene reshuffling for the comics medium. "Vengeance from the Desert" is the perfect example. A lot of fight scenes are suggested, but not given too much space, the focus being instead on the intrigues and human backstabbing and all the other facets that raise Conan a cut above the gore which sometimes gets labeled Sword-and-Sorcery.

The artwork by John Buscema and Ernie Chan has never been better. As I have said before of these two men: Buscema & Chan can do no wrong.

Mark Ryan
St. Louis, MO

Dear wild-and-crazy barbarians:

I have been a Marvel fan for about ten years now, reading most of the comics that you've introduced. Most recently, I've become a Conan freak — especially since KING CONAN has come out.

I loved #6 and cheered the return of the Zuagirs. I have only one suggestion: please put out KING CONAN more often. I can't stand the torture of waiting three months for the next issue!

Gregg Stein
321 East 45th Street
New York, NY 10017

Dear Marvel:

When it comes to CONAN, I'll take the KING! It was nice seeing Conan on the shifting desert sands, but I'm getting a little tired of seeing people spit in Conan stories.

Quest-style stories are always enjoyable — especially sword-and-sorcery quest stories — and the search for Zenobia is one of the best. And, when they talk about "comic novels," this one'll certainly qualify after all the episodes are published — being several hundred pages long. You should issue CONAN THE AVENGER in the new special album format that Marvel's been talking about, with hardcovers and all, printed on good paper. How about it?

Y'know, I don't know if you folks have ever thought about it, but Conan stands alone when it comes to comics characters. He never entertains self-doubts, which sets him apart from so many of the other Marvel heroes, and is strangely refreshing in its own way. Instead of agonizing and deliberating over every decision, Conan knows what he wants, and goes right ahead to get it. Self-confident, sure, cowed not even by supernatural encounters, able to sleep soundly at night, fight his way through hordes of foes, and woo the women, he's quite a guy. Yet he's definitely human, with his own down-to-earth foibles — such as tearing savagely at food, having bad manners and a certain lack of couth.

As for KING CONAN, I hope you exploit to the full the incredible potential that his position promises — with all the intrigue, the somewhat more complex problems of state, the conflict of wearing the crown, you know... the works! This magazine could become another milestone in the Marvel Age, but only if you don't blow it. I trust you won't.

Did you ever stop to wonder, even for a moment, about what Robert E. Howard might have thought of all this? Ah, if only an armload of issues of CONAN could have been shipped through a time warp, back to him then, what surprise and excitement he might have felt! You've definitely done him proud — and now there's a Conan *movie* in the works, too! Wow, who would have thought, way back when Marvel's first Conan comic hit the stands, that the barbarian would become this popular?

All right, enough speculating on my part (you can publish my next letter in WHAT IF...?). So long, dog-brothers, and here's to a long reign for KING CONAN!

Samuel Katz
421 Orchard Street
Bayonne, FL

**You raised some interesting points about what sets Conan apart, Sam — and we always welcome armchair analysis of our characters, so what do the rest of you out there have to say? As for a collection of the CONAN THE AVENGER adaptation issues as a Marvel Album, we have no such plans at present — although don't be surprised to see an all-new savage surprise in the aforementioned format in the not-too-far future!**

Dear Louise,

It's pretty strange seeing Conan in a king's wardrobe while slinging his savage sword. Still, KING CONAN is a terrific mag and #6 was a thoroughly enjoyable issue. Prince Conn is a spunky character as Conan's son.

Just one thing: can't you do something about increasing the frequency of publication on KING CONAN?

Napoleon Zivkovic
Paterson, NJ

**What? You mean, even with a *monthly* CONAN THE BARBARIAN regular-size comic, and a *monthly* SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN full-length magazine, this year's CONAN ANNUAL, not to mention this *quarterly* double-length KING CONAN comic — you guys want *more?* By Crom and by cracky! That's good news to us, except for one little thing... how the heck we manage to meet the deadlines now is a mystery to us, and we won't even venture to guess what might happen if we push our luck any further! Still, you never know...!**

Dear Aquilonians,

LONG LIVE THE KING!!!

"Kal of Cal"
Kaiani Lee
2744 Willow Place
South Gate, CA 90280

**And here's a sensational sixteen-word salute to our sensational Cimmerian readers: As long as there are loyal legions of you out there, the King will live forever!**

A HYBORIAN PIN-UP GALLERY
CONAN TRIUMPHANT!
THE CIMMERIAN PONDERS HIS NEXT MOVE. HIS OPPONENTS HAVE JUST MADE THEIR LAST.
pollard

A HYBORIAN PIN-UP GALLERY
WINGED DEATH!

A HYBORIAN PIN-UP GALLERY
COMBAT IN A
TIME-LOST LAND!